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ICELAND;

OR THE

JOURNAL OF A RESIDENCE

IN THAT ISLAND,

DURING THE YEARS 1814 AND 1815.

CONTAINING

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURAL PHENOMENA, HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND ANTIQUITIES OF THE ISLAND; AND THE RELIGION, CHARACTER, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS OF ITS INHABITANTS.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION AND APPENDIX.

BY EBENEZER HENDERSON,

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Illustrated with a Map and Engravings.

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TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

CHRISTIAN FREDERIC,

PRINCE OF DENMARK,

&c. &c. &c.

FROM A PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

OF THE DEEP INTEREST

WHICH HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS TAKES

IN THE INHABITANTS AND LITERATURE OF ICELAND;

AS A TESTIMONY OF RESPECT

FOR THE LIBERAL PATRONAGE AND SUPPORT

WHICH HE AFFORDS

TO THE CAUSE OF THE BIBLE SOCIETY,

AND A TRIBUTE

OF THE MOST UNFEIGNED GRATITUDE

FOR REPEATED INSTANCES OF CONDESCENDING REGARD,

THIS VOLUME

IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

MOST OBEDIENT

AND MOST DEVOTED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

WERE it necessary to offer any apology for the publication of this Volume, it would be amply furnished by the interest which has been excited in the public mind in behalf of the island of which it treats. Not only have individuals, of purely scientific habits, had their curiosity awakened and gratified by the details of natural research, with which they have been presented by those who have recently visited Iceland, with a view to explore its extraordinary phenomena; but such as bend their attention more to the history of man, and especially those who wish to contemplate him as affected by the influence of moral and religious principle, have felt a most lively concern about the inhabitants of that remote country, and expressed an ardent desire of becoming more intimately acquainted with the peculiarities of their character and habits of life.

The object which the author had in view in visiting Iceland, was exclusively to investigate the wants of its inhabitants with respect to the Holy Scriptures; to adopt the most eligible measures for the speedy distribution of the copies which had been provided for them by the bounty of the British and Foreign Bible Society; and to establish a similar institution among

the Icelanders, for the purpose of providing them in future with seasonable and adequate supplies of this invaluable repository of Divine Revelation. On his arrival, he found that it would be impossible for him to attain this object, except by making the tour of the island, and visiting those of its inhabitants whose concurrence and co-operation were deemed of importance to the execution of his plan; and as its extent, and the difficulties necessarily connected with travelling, are very considerable, he was obliged to spend upwards of a year in that country, and make his projected tour at different times.

The present work contains the result of the observations which he made in the course of these journies. Where he went over the same ground with former travellers, he has in a great measure been anticipated by the remarks which they have laid before the public; although he flatters himself the reader will not peruse even this part of his narrative without meeting with instances both in confirmation and amplification of their statements. But most of the regions through which he passed have never been visited by any native of Great Britain, and many of them had been wholly unexplored by foreigners.

The very prominent place which the natural appearances of the island occupy on almost every page, arises from the predominance and extraordinary characters of these phenomena. It is impossible for a stranger to take a single step in Iceland, without having some uncommon object of this description presented to his view; and, in taking down notes of his progress, his principal difficulty lies in the selection of subjects where such a multiplicity claim his attention. It not unfrequently happens that he is denied the

pleasure of seeing a human being for several days together, when proceeding from one part of the island to another. In crossing the deserts of the interior, he may travel two hundred miles without perceiving the smallest symptom of animated being of any description whatever; and, even in traversing the inhabited parts, he still finds himself more surrounded by nature than by human society, owing to the distance from one farm-house to another.

It was not the intention of the author to have entered at all on the subject of the history and literature of Iceland, especially as they have been treated with such consummate ability by Dr Holland, in those parts of Sir George Mackenzie's Travels which are furnished by his pen; but it afterwards occurred to him, that many of those who perused this volume might not have an opportunity of seeing that work; and, in order to remove the defect which must thus have attached to it, he has drawn up a brief sketch of the island and its inhabitants, and given it the form of an Introduction. Such as may wish to obtain fuller information on these subjects, he most cordially refers to Dr Holland's Preliminary Dissertation.

The inquiry into Icelandic Poetry, was occasioned by a close study of that species of composition, with a view to ascertain the meaning of the Edda, in which is contained the ancient mythology of the Scandinavian nations. In this study the author was greatly assisted by a Danish work, entitled, "Nordens Ældste Poesie," by Jon Olafson, a learned Icelandic antiquary and philologist.

The Map is constructed from the most recent maps which we have of Iceland, with a number of correc-

tions, made from the author's personal observation, assisted by an accurate sketch, which was kindly furnished him by one of the Danish officers employed in surveying the coasts.

For any inaccuracies, in point of language, the author claims the indulgence of his readers; which he feels assured they will not deny him, when he informs them, that, during an absence of thirteen years from his native country, his attention has been more directed to the study of other languages, than to the cultivation of his own.

EDINBURGH,
April 21, 1818.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION..... Page 1—36

CHAP. I.

Voyage from Copenhagen to Iceland—Copenhagen Roads—Island of Hveen—Tycho Brahe—Elsineur—Gottenburgh—Shetland—Ice-Mountains—Cape Reykianess—Land at Reykiavik—Description of the Town—Visit to the Archdeacon at Gardè—Hafnarfiord—Preparations for an Inland Journey—Divine Service in the Cathedral ..... 37—51

CHAP. II.

Leave Reykiavik for the North—Mode of Travelling—Mossfell Church—Skàlabrecka—Mode of Salutation in Iceland—Hospitality—Description of Icelandic Tents—Dreadful Fissure of Almannagià—Thingvalla Church—Seat of the Ancient Court of Justice—Tract of Lava—Fissure of Hrafnagià—Hot Springs of Laugarvalla—The Geysers—Haukadal—Ari the Learned—Remarkable instance of Intelligence in a Girl—White River—White River Lake—Desert—Ice-Mountains—Valley of Eyafiord—Group of Icelanders reading the New Testament—Factory of Akureyri—Want of Bibles, and anxiety to obtain them—Visit to the Sheriff at Kiarne—Female Library—Domestic Worship ..... 52—96

CHAP. III.

Excursion to Holum—Mödruvalla Abbey—Clergymen of Audabrecka and Steinstad—Translator of Milton—Hialtadals-heidè—Ascent of the Yökul—Holum—Gisle Jonson—Cathedral—Gudbrand Thorlakson—Removal of the Press—Abolition of the School and Episcopal See—Situation and present state of Holum—MSS.—Icelandic Meals—Extent of Hospitality—Hot Springs—Return to Akureyri ..... 97—116

CHAP. IV.

Journey to Vopnafiord—Public Worship and Catechizing at Hâls—Icelandic Dress—Pauperage—Piety—Skialfandafliot—Lava—Salmon River—Husavik—Hot Springs of Reykiahverf—Greniadarstad—Lava, near Myvatn—Traces of Volcanic Eruptions in the Bible—Eruptions of Leirhnukr and Krabla—Church of Reykiahlid—Myvatn—Sulphur Mountain—Hot Springs—Ascent of Krabla—Boiling Pool in the Crater—Agate Mountain

—Desert—Dangerous River—Grimstad—Rural Happiness—Computation of Time—Desert—Hof in Vopnafiord ..... Page 117—167

CHAP. V.

Journey through Mulè Syssels—Icelandic Psalm-book—Bridge and Basket—Punishment for neglect of Education—Eskifiord—Holmar—Bewildered on Stapsheidè—Mountains of Breiddal—Visit Eydal—Berufiord—Factory of Diupavog—Circulating Libraries—Rich Minerals—Hammarsfiord—Starmyra—Lonsheidi—Stafafell—Yökulsà-i-Lon ..... 168—188

CHAP. VI.

Yökulsâ-i-Lon—West Foreland—Magnificent Prospect—Beautiful Basaltic Pillars—Ice Mountains of Myrar and Heinaberg—Basalts—Fellshverfi—Description of Breidamark Yökul, or Moving Ice-Field—Hypothesis respecting its formation, and change of position—Dangerous Yökul River—Öræfa Yökul and Volcano—Volcanic Eruption of 1727 described—Skaftafell—Topographical View—Moving Ice Mountain of Skeiderà—Passage of the Skeiderà—Promontory of Lomagnupr—Fliotshverfi ..... 189—216

CHAP. VII.

West Skaftafell's Syssel—Skaftâr Volcano—Eruption of 1783 described—Sida—Hörgland Hospital—Icelandic Leprosy—Kyrkiubæ—Basalts—Landbrot—Passage of the Kudafliot—Thyckvabæ—Myrdals-sand—Wild Corn—Kötlugiâr Volcano—Its Eruptions described—Vik—Hafursà—Narrow escape ..... 219—253

CHAP. VIII.

Fell—Solheima—Yökul River—Solheima Yökul—Caves—Steinar—Varmahlid—Vestmanna Islands—Algerine Pirates—Hollt—Markarfliot—Intelligent Peasant—Fliotshlid—Oddè—Dean Jonson—Saumund Sigfusson—Mount Hekla—Number of its Eruptions—Eyrarbacka—Desolate Mountains—Rein-deer—Reykiavik ..... 254—272

CHAP. IX.

Winter in Iceland—Climate—Greenland Ice—Aurora Borealis—Travelling—Occupations in general—Winter Employments—Fishery—Manner in which the Icelanders spend the long Evenings—Family Devotion—Education—Bessastad School—Solitude of Winter—Tone of Society at Reykiavik ..... 273—290

CHAP. X.

Journey through the Syssels of Borgarfiord, Myrar, Hnappadal, and Snæfellsness—Innraholm—Leyrà—Printing Office—Hvitàrveliir—Staffholt—Hot Springs—Sheep-pens—Volcano of Western Skardsheidi—Caves of Hytardal—Stadarhraun—Domestic Worship—Ale-wells—Elldborg, or Fortress of Fire—Stadarstad—Hot Spring of Lysuhol—Buda Volcano—Stappen—Ascent of Snæfell Yökul ..... 291—320

CHAP. XI.

Journey through the Syssel of Snæfellsness continued—Volcanic Remains—Ingialldshvol—Ennit—Olafsvik—Bulandshöfdi—Grundarfiord—Mode of Interment—Runic Epitaphs—Berserkia Lava and Cairn—Stickesholm—Thorsness—Temple of Thor—Mode of Sacrificing, and Origin of Toasts—Helgafell—Thingvalla—Stone of Sacrifice—Ancient and Modern Hospitality of the Islanders—Discovery of Greenland—Snoksdal, Page 321—343

CHAP. XII.

Journey through the Syssels of Dala, Bardastrand, and Isafiord—Hvam—Svinadal—Saubræarsveit—Kampur—Domestic Scene—Reykiaholar—Hot Springs—Breidafiord and its Islands—Eider Ducks—Flatey—Hergisley—Effects of Drunkenness—Briamslæk—Büdudal—Hrafnseyri—Foxes—Thingeyri—Hollt—Return—Superstition—Vatnseyri—Saudlauksdal—Eggert Olafsen—Bardastrand—Surturbrand—Gilsfiord—Raudsey—Skard—Basaltic Pillars near Burdardal ..... 344—376

CHAP. XIII.

Journey into Stranda Syssel, and return to Reykiavik—Glisfiord—Steindalsheidi—Fell—Paradise—Drift Timber—Stad—Interesting Interview with the Dean—Bitruhals—Hollta-vördu-heidi—View of the Sun at Midnight—Mount Baula—Reykiadal—Reykhollt—Snorro Sturluson's Bath—Biographical Sketch of Snorro—Hot Springs of Reykiadal—Saurbæ—Hebrew Scholar—Hvalfiord—Kiosar Syssel—Reykiavik ..... 377—397

CHAP. XIV.

Handels-tid, or Period of Traffic—Mode of Travelling to Market—Exports and Imports—History of Icelandic Commerce—Benevolence of the British Government—Order in Council—The Interest kept up by the National Assembly—Its Abolition—Formation of the Icelandic Bible Society—Letter from its Secretary—Ditto from Bishop Vidalin—Salmon Fishery, 398—414

CHAP. XV.

Almannagiá—Armannsfell—Skialldbreid Volcano—Kaldidal—Husafell—Sagacity of the Mouse—Gilsbacka—The remarkable Cavern of Surtshellir described—Arnarvatn—Desert—Bewildered in a Fog—Hot Springs of Hveravellir described—Blöndudal—The Rustic Astronomer—Factory of Skagastrand ..... 415—436

CHAP. XVI.

Leave Skagastrand—Hvam—Valley of Skagafiord—Drángey—Glaumbæ—Mœlifell—Holum—Church of Urdir—Intelligent Peasant—Mödrufell—Sira Jon Jonson—His excellent character—Forms a Tract Society—Return through the Desert—Yfri Reykium—Alftavatn—Hot Springs of Reykium—Earthquakes—Sulphur Mountain, and Springs of Krisuvik—Leave Iceland—Arrive in Copenhagen ..... 437—458

APPENDIX.

No. I.—A Historical View of the Translations and different Editions of the Icelandic Scriptures..... Page 459—496

No. II.—Poem of Thanks from Iceland to the British and Foreign Bible Society, by Sira Jon Thorlakson of Bægisâ, the translator of "Paradise Lost" into Icelandic verse ..... 497—510

No. III.—An Inquiry into the origin, progress, nature, and characteristic features of Icelandic Poetry .....511—564

DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

1. Place the Map before the Introduction ..... Page 1
2. Hay-making, and View of the Almannagiâ, to face 58
3. The Geysers 72
4. View of Holum 111
5. Icelandic Dresses 120
6. Jetting Pool in the Crater of Krabla 152
7. Herdubreid 161
8. Öræfa Yökul, as seen from the Breidamark River 203
9. Öræfa Yökul, as seen from the base of Lomagnupr 214
10. View of Elldborg 308
11. View of the Coast near Stappen 315
12. Snæfell Yökul 320
13. View of Dyrafiord 359
14. Hot Springs of Hveravellir 430
15. Exhibition of Basalts near Hoskuldstad 436
16. View of the Skagafiord, and mode of Travelling 433

INTRODUCTION.

The island of Iceland is situated in the Atlantic Ocean, on the confines of the polar circle, between 63° 24′ and 66° 30′ of north latitude, and between 13° 15′ and 24° 40′ in longitude west of Greenwich.

The opinion, that this island owes its formation to the operations of submarine volcanoes, is not only confirmed by analogical reasonings deduced from the appearances presented by other islands, which are confessedly of volcanic origin, but gains ground in proportion to the progress of a closer and more accurate investigation of the geological phenomena which every part of it exhibits to the view of the naturalist. In no quarter of the globe do we find crowded within the same extent of surface such a number of ignivomous mountains, so many boiling springs, or such immense tracts of lava, as here arrest the attention of the traveller. The general aspect of the country is the most rugged and dreary imaginable. On every side appear marks of confusion and devastation, or the tremendous sources of these evils in the yawning craters of huge and menacing volcanoes. Nor is the mind of a spectator relieved from the disagreeable emotions arising from reflection on the subterraneous fires which are raging beneath him, by a temporary survey of the huge mountains of perpetual ice by which he is surrounded. These very masses, which naturally exclude the most distant idea of heat, contain in their bosom the fuel of conflagration, and are frequently seen to emit smoke and flames, and pour down

upon the plains immense floods of boiling mud and water, or red-hot torrents of devouring lava.

The principal volcanoes are: the Öræfa, Skaptâr, Kötlugiâ, Solheima, Myrdal, Torfa, Eyafialla, Arnarfell, Eirik, Bald, Blâfell, Geitland, Snæfell, Drânga, and Glâma Yökuls or ice mountains; Krabla, Hrafntinnufiall, Leirhnukr, Biarnarflag, Hitahol, Hrossaborg, Herdabreid, Sniâfiall, Trolladyngiar, Kerlingafiall, Hekla, Skialldbreid, Skardsheidi, Henglafiall, and the range of mountains which stretch from thence to Cape Reykianess, near which an old submarine volcano was in action not many years ago. There exists, besides, an immense number of smaller cones and craters, from which streams of melted substances have been poured forth over the surrounding regions. Of these volcanoes, Krabla, Leirhnukr, Biarnarflag, Hitahol, Hekla, and the Kötlugiâ, Solheima, Öræfa, and Skaptâr Yökuls have been active in the course of last century. The first four are situate in the northern division of the island, near the lake Myvatn, and are supposed to have some subterraneous communication with each other. The rest lie in nearly a direct line along the southern coast.

Tracts of lava traverse the island in almost every direction. The most extensive fields are those in the volcanic regions around Myvatn. The northern and eastern shores of that lake are completely covered with lava; it abounds with islands consisting of the same substance; and a dreadful torrent has been poured down the river which it supplies, into Reykiadal, Adaldal, and the plain on the eastern margin of the Skialfandafliot. Another stream appears to have flowed down Bârdardal, along the western margin of the same river, from some volcano in the interior. A considerable stretch of melted substances is also met with to the north-east of Husavik; and on the east side of the large Yökul river, which falls into the Axarfiord, another melted tract runs through the parish of Presthol. To the east of Krabla, and the sulphur mines of Reykiahlid, a large stream of lava stretches into the interior, where the Fremri or more distant sulphur mines are situated, the vicinity of which also consists of lava;

and from the mountain around which these mines lie, as far as the eye can reach, nothing is seen but one interminable region of desolation. The dismal gloom of this tract is barely relieved by the columns of smoke that are constantly ascending into the atmosphere, through apertures and fissures in various parts of the surface.

Here the Odâda Hraun or "Horrible Lava" begins, and extends to a great distance towards the south and west. It is described as the wildest and most hideous tract on the whole island. Its surface is extremely rugged—consisting of broken and pointed rocks, between which are fissures and chasms of a tremendous size, that throw insuperable barriers in the way of any traveller who might wish to penetrate beyond them.

From the north-west point of the Hof or Arnarfell Yökul, a huge stream proceeds in a westerly direction, the surface of which is very slaggy and uneven; and a few miles farther south lies the Kiöl-Hraun, an extensive stream of very cavernous lava, which has flowed from Bald Yökul, and extends to the northern margin of the Hvitârvatn. Crossing the Yökul, we fall in with the tract in which the remarkable cave of Surtshellir is situated, and further west lie torrents of lava in Nordurârdal, or West Skardsheidi, and in the division, called from this very circumstance, Hraunhrepp, or the District of Lava. The whole tract from thence to the Snæfell Yökul is almost entirely covered with the same substance, of which the more remarkable streams are the Borgarhraun, Barnaborgshraun, Budahraun, Berserkiahraun, and those in the vicinity of Kolbeinstad, and Raudmelr.

In the south of Iceland lie the extensive tracts of melted rock about Thingvalla, where scarcely any thing appears but one scene of universal desolation, and rents of upwards of a hundred feet in width are seen to stretch to the length of several miles. The divisions of Grimsness, Ölfus, and Mossfell, exhibit greater or less quantities of lava throughout the whole of their surface; and between Reykiavik and Cape Reykianess are not fewer than six different streams, some of which appear to have been oftener than once in a state of fusion.

In many parts of these lavas, the heat is still so great, that in winter, when the vapour is prevented by the snow from making its escape from the general surface of the ground, it is impossible to enter any of the caverns, on account of the sulphureous smell which they emit. The Faxe Fiord abounds with lava; and the fishermen frequently find beds of it alternating with sand-banks, at the depth of forty fathoms. The Elld-eyar consist entirely of submarine lava; and from these islands a number of dangerous rocks stretch in a south-west direction to the distance of nearly seventy miles, which have been thrown up from time to time from the bottom of the sea.

The lavas about Mount Hekla are well known; and the whole plain between that volcano and the sea is filled with the same substance, till within a few feet of the surface of the ground. The Vestmanna islands are also of volcanic origin. Behind the Eyafialla Yökul a stream of lava juts forward between the Markarfliot and a fertile tract called Thorsmark; another large torrent has inundated the extensive plain between Myrdal and Thyckvabæ Abbey; in the divisions of Sida and Fliotshverfi we meet with the recent Skaptâr and Hverfisfliot lavas, which cover vast beds of very ancient lava; and a little farther east, is the Brunahraun, apparently the oldest of any in Iceland.

Besides the common lavas, Iceland abounds in other mineral masses, which sufficiently indicate their igneous origin. Of these, the more plentiful are tuffa and submarine lava. Whole mountains of the former are found in every part of the island. The obsidian, or Icelandic agate, which is nothing but black vitreous lava, abounds in many districts, especially near Myvatn, where there is a mountain which takes its name from it. Of the sulphur mountains, a particular description is given in the journal.

Another proof of the universality of volcanic agency, and of the continued existence of subterraneous fires in Iceland, is the multiplicity of hot springs in which it abounds. Not that I suppose any direct or immediate communication to be kept up between these springs and some central source of

heat; but that some extensive conflagration is going forward below the surface of the earth is evident: and it seems more natural to conclude that it has originated in volcanic eruptions than in the separate ignition of fossil bodies, especially as the hot springs are always found in connection with lava or other volcanic matter. Many of these springs throw up large columns of boiling water, accompanied by immense volumes of steam, to an almost incredible height into the atmosphere, and present to the eye of the traveller some of the grandest scenes to be met with on the face of the globe. The principal are the Geysers, near Haukadal; the Reykium springs in the district of Ölfus, and the sulphur springs of Krisuvik in the south; those of Reykiadal in the west; Hveravellir in the interior; and those of Reykiahverf and Krabla in the north.

Celebrated as this island has been for its volcanoes and hot springs, it is scarcely less remarkable on account of the enormous ice-mountains which occupy a vast portion of its surface. To these mountains the natives give the name of Yökuls, which signify large masses of ice. They have generally terreous and rocky mountains for their basis; and, in many places, exhibit magnificent glaciers, which commence at a great height, and run down with a very rapid descent into the plains. The most extensive of all the Icelandic Yökuls is that called Klofa Yökul, in the eastern quarter of the island. It lies behind the Yökuls and other mountains which line the south-east coast, and forms, with little or no interruption, a vast chain of ice and snow mountains, which are supposed to fill a space of not less than three thousand square miles. The rest of the ice-mountains in that division, all of which appear to be connected with the Klofa Yökul, are distinguished by the names of Hof, Lon, Hofsfell, Svinafell, Myrar, Heinaberg, Kâlfafell, Breidamark, Öræfa, Skeiderâ, Skaptâr, Kötlugiâ, Myrdal, and Solheima Yökuls. Of these, the four last, and the Öræfa, are volcanic Yökuls. Though covered with coats of ice of immense thickness, when the internal parts of the mountains become ignited, the mass of ice or indurated snow

is cracked and rent by the explosion which ensues; a great quantity of it is melted by the flames, or the exundations of hot water; and whole fields of ice are sometimes deposited on the neighbouring plains. Some of these Yökuls are remarkable for their vacillation; not remaining in a settled position, but moving forwards and receding again at certain indefinite periods. In the southern division of the island lie the Eyafialla, Torfa, and Tindafialla Yökuls; to the west of the Hvitârvatn stretches the chain known by the names of Bald, Blâfell, Geitland, and Eirik Yökuls; Snæfell, Glâma and Drânga, rise into view in the west; and in the north lies the Hof or Arnarfell Yökul, the only considerable mountain of this description in that quarter of the island.

Numerous ridges of rugged and irregular mountains stretch across the interior, and, from these, other inferior mountains branch out towards the coasts, and, in many instances, terminate in high and steep promontories. Between these ridges, in the vicinity of the coasts, are rich and beautiful vallies, in which the inhabitants have erected their dwellings: and many of the low mountains are covered with coarse grass, which affords summer pasturage to the cattle. The most extensive tract of low country is that between the districts of Myrdal and Öræfa, where the traveller pursues his journey, for the period of four days, without seeing any thing like a mountain in the immediate vicinity. The whole of the interior, as far as it has been explored, consists of a vast inhospitable desert, transversed in various directions by barren mountains, between which are immense tracts of lava and volcanic sand, with here and there a small spot, scantily covered with vegetation.

It is evident, from ancient Icelandic documents, that on the arrival of the Norwegians, and for several centuries afterwards, pretty extensive forests grew in different parts of the island, and furnished the inhabitants with wood both for domestic and nautical purposes. Owing, however, to their improvident treatment of them, and the increased severity of the climate, they have almost entirely disappeared; and what remains, scarcely deserves any other name than

that of underwood, consisting for the most part of birch, willow, and mountain-ash; but this want of indigenous wood is in some measure supplied by the quantities of floating timber which are drifted upon the coasts from the American continent.

That grain was produced in former times in Iceland, appears both from the names of many places, such as Akkrar, Akkraness, Akkrahverar, &c.—the word Akr signifying a corn-field, and from certain laws in the ancient code, in which express mention is made of such fields, and a number of regulations are prescribed relative to their division and cultivation. How this important branch of rural economy was laid aside, it is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty; but it is generally supposed that it was occasioned by the epidemic disease, called the Black-Death, which raged here in the fifteenth century, and carried off nearly two-thirds of the inhabitants. Many are of opinion that grain might still be raised in Iceland; but the natives are more partial to the cultivation of grass, as they consider the breeding of sheep to be much more advantageous.

The island contains several large lakes, and numerous rivers of great magnitude, many of which supply the inhabitants with abundance of fresh-water fish. To enlarge upon these is unnecessary at this place, as they are described when they occur in the narrative.

The most ancient account of the discovery and colonization of Iceland to be relied upon as authentic, is that contained in the Landnâmabok, or the Book of Occupation; a work which enters with the greatest minuteness into the circumstances and transactions of the original settlers. It was begun by Ari Frode, and continued by Kolskegg, and other learned men after his death.*

* Islands Landnâmabok: Hoc est: Liber Originum Islandiæ. Havniæ, 1774, 4to. It is published in Icelandic and Latin. In the preface to this volume it is asserted, that previous to the arrival of the Norwegians, the island was inhabited by Christians, who are supposed to have come from some part of the British isles. They are stated to have left behind them Irish books, bells, and crosiers; but no traces having been found of churches or dwelling-houses,

In this volume we are informed, that Naddodd, a famous Norwegian pirate, who had been obliged to settle on the Faroe Islands, as the only place where he could be safe from the attacks of those whom he had plundered, on his return from an expedition against Norway, about the year 860, was driven by a tempest on the coast of Iceland. Entering one of the eastern friths, he ascended a high mountain, from which he commanded an extensive prospect of the island, but discovered no vestige whatever of its being inhabited. The following autumn he again put to sea; and observing the mountains to be covered with an immense quantity of snow, he gave to the island the name of *Snæland*, or the Land of Snow. It was again discovered in the year 864, by Gardar Svafarson, a native of Sweden, who, on proceeding through the Pentland Frith, on a voyage to the Western Islands of Scotland, in order to take possession of some property which had there been left him by his father-in-law, was in like manner driven by a storm to the westward, till he reached the eastern coast of Iceland, and circumnavigating it, discovered it to be an island; and, on that account, called it *Gardarsholm*, or the Island of Gardar. Having entered the bay, afterwards named Skialfandafiord, he landed on its eastern shore, where he erected a habitation, and spent the winter, but returned the following spring to Norway.

The favourable account which he gave of the country, excited the spirit of adventure among the Norwegians; and Floki, another celebrated pirate, resolved to proceed thither, in order to take possession of the newly-discovered island. The compass being not then in use, Floki had recourse to superstition, and performing a great sacrifice, he devoted to the gods three ravens, which, having been thus consecrated, he took out with him to guide him on his voyage. Having touched at the Shetland and Faroe Isles, he proceeded towards Iceland. The first raven which he let loose returned to Faroe; the second, after having ascended to some height

* is most probable they had only been occasional visitors, who repaired thither during the summer months for the purpose of fishing, and returned home again before winter.

in the air, returned again to the ship; but the third directed its flight towards Iceland, where Floki shortly afterwards landed. Not being pleased with the appearance of the coasts about the East Foreland, where he first touched, he sailed round the southern and western shores, till he came to Vatnsfiord in the division of Bardastrand, where he took possession of a certain extent of country; but, having devoted too much of his time to fishing, he neglected the hay-harvest: the consequence of which was, that all the cattle he had taken with him, died in the course of the winter. Full of chagrin at this loss, and the coldness of the ensuing spring, and happening to discover, from the summit of one of the mountains, that one of the bays was completely filled with ice, he determined to repair to a warmer region, and gave to the island the name by which it has ever since been known. Having spent the following winter near Hafnarfiord, Floki returned next summer to Norway, fully resolved to abandon, for ever, the idea of settling in Iceland.

That the name he gave to the island, and the report which he spread of it, on his return, were more the effect of prejudice and disappointment, than derived from any other cause, is evident from the very different account given by Heriolf and Thorolf, his two companions on the expedition. The former depicted it as a most delightful country; and the latter did not conceive how he could better convey an adequate idea of its richness and fertility, than by asserting, that "butter dropped from every plant" it produced.

In the year 870, Iceland was again visited by two Norwegians, of the name of Hiörleif and Ingolf, who were so highly satisfied with its appearance, that, after wintering there, they returned to Norway, in order to make every possible preparation for a permanent establishment on the island. This they effected, A. D. 874, and from this year the Icelanders date the occupation of the country. Closely as these two settlers were allied to each other in every other respect, they differed widely on the subject of religion. Of Hiörleif it is recorded, that he never offered sacrifice; whereas Ingolf appears to have been addicted to all the idolatrous

and superstitious customs of the age; and not only consulted an oracle, respecting his future destiny, previous to his departure from Norway, but on his arrival off the coast of Iceland, he threw the principal wooden pillars of his house, which he had taken with him, into the sea, and made a vow, that he would choose, as the site of his future habitation, the spot where they should be cast on shore. As mentioned in the beginning of the journal, he afterwards found these driven up near the portion of ground occupied by Reykiavik, the present capital of the island.

Nothing contributed more essentially to promote the colonization of Iceland, than the tyranny at that time exercised by Harald Harfagra over the inhabitants of Norway. This prince, not contented with the hereditary crown left him by his father, extended his ambitious views to all the petty kingdoms in that part of Scandinavia; and in the course of a short time completely subdued them, and thereby put an end to that system of liberty and independence which they had hitherto enjoyed. Such of the kings as submitted to him, he suffered to retain their kingdoms under the name of earldoms, on condition that he should receive two-thirds of the royal tribute that was raised by their subjects. But the greater number of these petty princes preferred a life of exile on foreign shores, to the cruel oppression under which they groaned in their native country. Accompanied by their families, and a numerous train of dependents, they emigrated towards the west, and formed numerous colonies on the Hebrides, the Orkney, Shetland, and Faroe Islands. To no quarter, however, did they flock in greater numbers than to Iceland: being attracted to that island, on the one hand, by the promising accounts that were circulated respecting its fertility, and stimulated, on the other, by the hopes of being placed in perfect security from the attacks of their oppressor. In little more than half a century, all the coasts around the island were occupied by settlers; and, in order to put a stop to the emigration, King Harald was under the necessity of imposing a heavy fine upon all who left Norway for Iceland.

On their arrival, the new settlers proceeded to take possession of such parts of the island as lay in the immediate vicinity of the place where they landed. At first, they appear to have marked off larger districts than they could properly manage; but, finding this extent of territory disadvantageous, they conformed to a regulation made in the mother-country—that no individual should be permitted to appropriate to his use more land than he could measure off in one day, by proceeding round it with fire, and kindling the grass, or heaps of bushes raised at the different boundaries. The chiefs having been accompanied by a number of free men who had not been able to fit out an expedition by themselves, had naturally the privilege of allotting certain parts of the country for occupation to these individuals, where they erected their habitations, and enjoyed that liberty which had entirely deserted their native land. Such as had already arrived threw no obstacles in the way of those who followed, but treated them with the hospitality due to fellow-citizens, and assisted them with their advice in regard to their settlement on the island.

For some time after the arrival of the Norwegians, the patriarchal form of government seems to have obtained among them. However, they soon found it necessary to establish certain common regulations for their mutual protection and benefit; and, in doing this, they imitated as closely as possible, the mode of administration which had prevailed in Norway. The people of that country had been accustomed, from time immemorial, to frequent public assemblies, at which the king presided, and to give their vote in the matters which came before them. To entitle them to vote on these occasions, it was not necessary to possess extensive landed property, but simply to have some land, how small soever the quantity. Physical or mental strength naturally procure for those who are possessed of them an ascendancy over their less-gifted brethren; and we feel powerfully inclined to entrust the management or protection of our concerns to such as are likely to afford us these advantages. The new settlers in Iceland, dividing themselves into smaller com-

munities, proportioned to the size of the different regions of the island which they inhabited, elected one of their number to be arbiter of their disputes, and the prime minister of religion, on which account he obtained the name of *Godi*. He was generally a man of superior abilities and extensive influence in the district over which he presided. Their *Thing*, or public assembly, was held at stated periods, and their legal procedures were always solemnized by the observance of certain religious ceremonies. Dipping a ring in the blood of a sacrificed victim, not only such as were to appear as witnesses, but the judge himself took it, and repeated the customary oath: "So help me, Freya, and Thor, and the Omnipotent God!"

About the year 928, the inhabitants of Iceland formed themselves into a regular republic; and so admirably did they distribute the different powers of government, that their mutual rights were secured without any compromise of personal liberty. They divided the island into four quarters, agreeably to a division already made in its natural constitution, in each of which a chief magistrate was elected by the free suffrage of the people, whose office very much resembled that of the *Godi* before described, only his jurisdiction was much more extensive. Each quarter was subdivided into three prefectures or sheriffdoms, excepting the northern quarter, which, on account of its size, was divided into four. These were governed by an officer, whose department it was to pay due attention to the maintenance of order within his district; to call an assembly for the trial of public causes; to preside and judge on these occasions; and to see that the punishment prescribed by the laws of the republic were carried into execution. He was, at the same time, minister of religion; and upon him devolved the care of the temple, and the preservation of due respect to the rites of worship. The sheriffdoms were again divided into a number of smaller districts, called *Hrepps*, consisting of the families which lived contiguous to each other, and generally they were of the size of the present Icelandic parishes; and over each of these was appointed a *Hreppstiori*, or bailiff, who had the imme-

diate inspection of his own bailiwick, and whose office principally consisted in taking care of the poor, and especially in providing against an increase of pauperism. He had likewise his inferior court, at which he was assisted by four of the most respectable members of the community; in the election of whom particular care was taken that they should be possessed of some property, in order to prevent them from being exposed to bribery or corruption. Such matters as could not be settled at this court were carried before that of the sheriff, where the *Hreppstiorar* were amenable for any breach of office. In extraordinary cases, there lay an appeal to the provincial court, or an assembly of deputies from the different sheriffdoms, which was held under the presidency of the chief magistrate of that quarter of the island. This court was not held at stated times like the others, but only convened on occasions of great importance and emergency.

Lastly, the Icelanders established a final court of appeal, which they called the *Althing*, or General Assembly of the nation, which was held annually, and lasted for sixteen days. Here, by common consent, the laws of the republic were enacted; and to this assembly the whole nation looked for the final and equitable adjustment of any differences which might arise among them. To the Supreme Magistrate who presided on these occasions, they gave the name of *Lögsögumadr*, or the Publisher of the Law. He was elected to this office by the free choice of the people, and generally retained it for life. His judgment, confirmed by the people, was in all cases considered as decisive. Though he possessed little or no power out of the assembly, he was always respected by his countrymen as the sovereign judge and the protector of their laws and liberties. To him was committed the custody of the written laws, and the copy in his possession was regarded as the standard. He had the power of examining and reversing the sentences passed by the inferior magistrates, and even of punishing them if it were proved that they had acted inconsistently with the spirit or dignity of their office. The degree of importance attached to the office of *Lögsögumadr* is

strikingly illustrated by the circumstance, that the Icelanders were in the habit of computing time by the periods during which it was held by the different judges. In a manuscript now before me, I find the names of thirty-seven distinguished individuals who filled this office between the years 927 and 1263, the period of the existence of the free Icelandic republic. Snorro Sturluson, the celebrated historian of the north, was twice elected chief magistrate, and possessed more power than any judge, either before or after his time.

For their excellent code of laws, the Icelanders were principally indebted to Ulfliot, one of their own countrymen, who, animated with a truly patriotic zeal, undertook a journey to Norway, in his sixtieth year, in order to acquire a perfect knowledge of the science and practice of jurisprudence. Having attained his object, he returned to Iceland in the year 927, and immediately made a tour of the island, with the view of persuading its inhabitants to adopt and sanction such laws as might be found applicable to their local and peculiar circumstances. The consequence was, that a general meeting was held the following year at Thingvalla, in the southern quarter of the island, at which the code of laws proposed by Ulfliot was received by the unanimous consent of the nation. The farm of Thingvalla having been confiscated on account of some heinous offence committed by its possessor, it was appropriated to the public use, and became the permanent seat of the national assembly. The laws of Ulfliot may be considered as an abstract of the *Gulathing* code, at that time in force in Norway. In the year 1118, an improved system of jurisprudence was introduced by Bergthor, at that time principal magistrate, chiefly modelled according to the famous Norwegian code *Grágás*; and in 1280, the collection of laws called *Jonsbok* was adopted, and this code still obtains in most instances in Iceland.

The existence and constitution of the Icelandic republic exhibit an interesting phenomenon in the history of man. We here behold a number of free and independent settlers, many of whom had been accustomed to rule in their native country, establishing a government on principles of the most

perfect liberty, and, with the most consummate skill, enacting laws which were admirably adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the nation. Unintimidated by any foreign power, guided solely by their own natural genius, and uninfluenced by any other principle than the love of liberty, security, and independence, they combined their interests and their energies in support of a political system, at once calculated to protect the rights of individuals, and inspire the community at large with sentiments of exalted patriotism.

This state of liberty the Icelanders maintained for the space of nearly four hundred years. It is true, their tranquillity was ultimately disturbed by a number of intestine feuds and bloody quarrels, against which the laws made no effectual provision; but these disturbances would never have assumed so serious an aspect, had they not been kindled and encouraged by the Kings of Norway, who always regarded Iceland with an envious eye, and employed all the arts of intrigue to bring its inhabitants into subjection to their sceptre. At last Hacon succeeded in effecting their subjugation. In the year 1261, the greater number of the inhabitants became tributary to Norway; and their example was followed, four years afterwards, by the natives of the eastern shores, who thus joined them in the transfer of themselves and their island to a foreign prince. In this very surrender, however, we observe the spirit of a free people; and, in fact, the Icelanders may be said to have all along retained their liberty; for the changes that were introduced in consequence of their junction to Norway, and even those which have resulted from their connection with Denmark since the year 1387, have been exceedingly immaterial; and no military force has ever set a foot on the island. In becoming subject to Norway, they expressly stipulated that they should be allowed to retain their ancient laws and privileges; that they should be exempt from taxes; and that the king should secure to them the annual importation of the most necessary articles of foreign produce, and preserve peace on the island by an earl appointed for that purpose. And, if these conditions were not ful-

filled, they were to be at liberty to withdraw their allegiance from the Norwegian crown.*

At present, Iceland is governed by a *Stiftamptman*, who is appointed by his Danish Majesty, and is bound to fill this office for the space of five years. He is generally one of the younger branches of a noble family, has a salary of about L. 300 *per annum*, and is entitled to preferment on his return to Denmark. He is likewise special governor of the southern quarter of the island in which he resides; and has two *Amtmen*, or deputy-governors, one for the western, and another for the northern and eastern quarters. These quarters are divided into *syssels*, or sheriffdoms, the boundaries of which are much the same as those fixed in the ancient constitution; and they are governed by a *Sysselman*, whose office also resembles that of the ancient sheriffs—only he has a lease of the King's taxes, and accounts to the royal treasurer for the amount. The syssels are again divided into a number of *Hrepps*, each of which is placed under the inspection of a *Hreppstiori* or constable, answering to the bailiff of former times.

There is, besides, another public officer called the *Landfoged*, or steward, who is treasurer or receiver-general for the island, and at the same time tax-gatherer of Gullbringe syssel, and police-master of Reykiavik.

In 1800 the venerable *Althing* was abrogated, and a supreme court substituted in its room at Reykiavik, consisting of a Chief-Justice, two Assessors, and a Secretary. This court meets once a month, and decides on criminal and other cases; only the Icelanders have the privilege of appealing from its decisions to the high court in Denmark. In ancient times, scarcely any other than pecuniary punishments obtained. Criminals were fined in a certain number of merks, each of which amounted to rather more than an ounce of fine silver, and was equal to forty-eight ells of woollen cloth;† but as this mode of punishment was found ineffectual to the prevention of crime, the laws became gradually more severe,

* Finni Johannei Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. i. p. 381.

† Mallet, vol. i. p. 176.

and at last capital punishments were introduced. Hanging was the mode inflicted for murder, drowning for child-murder, and burning for witchcraft. At present, fines, imprisonment, and whipping, are the only punishments inflicted in Iceland. Such as are capitally convicted, it is necessary to send over to Copenhagen to be beheaded; it being a curious fact, that, for some time past, no person could be found on the island who would execute the sentence of the law.

To the Icelanders belongs the honour of being the first discoverers of America and Greenland. The latter country had been seen by one Gunnbeörn, who had been driven out to sea in a storm, some time after the colonization of Iceland, but no attempt was made to find it again till the year 982, when Eirik the Red proceeded thither on a voyage of discovery. After spending the greater part of three years, exploring the coasts, and taking possession of such places as he deemed most suitable for occupation, he returned to Iceland, and spoke so highly in praise of the newly discovered country, to which he had given the name of *Greenland*, in order to excite a favourable idea of it in the minds of his countrymen, that he prevailed on a great number of them to accompany him the following summer. Not fewer than twenty-five vessels left Iceland under his convoy, but of these only fourteen reached the place of their destination; the rest were either lost or driven back to Iceland. * As the distance between the two countries was little more than two hundred miles, a regular intercourse was established between them; and the number of settlers increased so rapidly, that, soon after the introduction of the Christian religion, about the year 1000, a number of churches were built along the east coast, and a bishop was appointed to superintend the ecclesiastical affairs of the colony. He had his residence at Gardè, and was a suffragan to the Archbishop of Drontheim in Norway. A monastery, dedicated to St Thomas, was also erected at another small town, called Albe; and, for the space of more than three hundred and fifty years, a regular inter-

* Eyrbyggiasaga, cap. xxiv. Landnámabok, Part II. cap. xiv.

course was carried on between that country and Denmark, or Norway. In the year 1406, the last bishop was sent over to Greenland. Since then the colony has not been heard of; and its loss is attributed to the wars which took place at that time between the Danes and Swedes, which prevented the trading-vessels from putting to sea, and to the accumulation of vast shoals of ice around the coasts, by which they have been rendered totally inaccessible.

Different attempts have been made by order of the Danish government, to penetrate to the colony, but they have all proved unsuccessful; and some are of opinion, that no such colony ever existed on East Greenland, but that it was situate in the vicinity of the present Danish settlements on the western coast. Egede, * however, is of the contrary opinion, and he had the best opportunities of forming a judgment on the subject. Of late, this impenetrable barrier of ice appears to have been broken, and vast masses have been carried away to the southward. The consequence has been, that the vessels which navigate the arctic seas, have penetrated much farther than usual, and have seen the ocean perfectly void of ice, between the 74 and 80 degrees of north latitude. † It would certainly prove highly interesting, both to the friends of humanity and of literature, were the expedition now fitting out from this country for those seas, to discover this ancient colony; and give us an account of the state of religion and science among them, after they have been shut out for so long a period of time from all intercourse with the rest of the world. That the descendants of the ancient colonists may still exist, although cut off from any supplies from Denmark, is rendered probable, by the circumstance, that in Egede's time, the barrier of ice, as far as he explored it, did not connect with the shore, but left a space of open water, in which the inhabitants might catch a sufficient quantity of fish for their support.

The fact that America also was first discovered by the

* Description of Greenland, London, 1745, 8vo.

† Quarterly Review for October 1817, p. 202.

Icelanders, though less generally known, is perfectly well authenticated by the northern historians. Biarni Heriulfson, on a voyage from Iceland to Greenland, to visit his father, in the year 1001, was driven by a violent easterly gale into the Atlantic; and, after sailing several days, he discovered a fine woody country, in general flat, and only diversified by small heights, which rose into view upon the coast. Not being able to persuade his men to land, he proceeded with a south-west wind for Greenland, which he reached after a voyage of six days. The description which he gave of the country, some time after, excited the curiosity of Leif Eirikson, whose father had first taken possession of Greenland. This adventurer left Norway in a vessel navigated by thirty-five men, and made first a country to the south-west of Greenland, which, from the description given of its ice-mountains, appears to have been Labrador. Leaving this inauspicious region, they proceeded southwards, till they came to the flat woody country discovered by Biarni; but as they wished to explore the coasts to a greater distance, they again set sail with a north-east wind, and came in two days to an island, separated by a strait from the continent. Having proceeded up this strait, they came to a fine fresh water lake, on the shore of which they built a habitation for their winter residence. The lake abounded with the finest salmon, and the grass retained its verdure, in a great measure, the whole winter. The days were more of an equal length than in Greenland or Iceland, the sun being nine hours above the horizon at the shortest day. One of his men, who was from the south of Germany, having discovered that grapes grew there spontaneously, Leif gave to the country the appropriate name of Vinland, or Vineland, and returned the following spring to Greenland.

The American Continent was afterwards visited by Thovald, a brother of Eirik's, who was killed in an engagement with the natives; and a colony of Norwegians was settled there in the course of time, and continued to trade with the natives for the period of nearly two centuries, after the country had been discovered.

The population of Iceland is supposed to have been much greater in former times than it is at present. Numbers of the inhabitants were carried off by the plague in the year 1402; and in the years 1707 and 1708, not fewer than 16,000 persons were cut off by the small-pox.* In the year 1801, at which time the last census was taken, the population amounted to 47,207; but is supposed since that time to have received an addition of at least 3000.

With respect to the personal appearance of the Icelanders, they are rather tall, of a frank open countenance, a florid complexion, and yellow flaxen hair. The women are shorter in proportion, and more inclined to corpulency than the men; but many of them would look handsome in a modern European dress. In youth, both sexes are generally of a very weakly habit of body, which is the necessary consequence of their want of proper exercise, and the poorness of their living; yet it is surprising what great hardships they are capable of enduring in after life. It is seldom any of them attain to a very advanced age: however, the females commonly live longer than the men. Owing to the nature of their food, their want of personal cleanliness, and their being often obliged to sit long in wet woollen clothes, they are greatly exposed to cutaneous diseases. They are also frequently attacked with obstinate coughs and pulmonary complaints, by which perhaps more are carried off annually than by any other disease.

It has been said, that, in general, the Icelanders are of a sullen and melancholy disposition; but, after paying the strictest attention to their appearance and habits, I must pronounce the statement inaccurate, and one which could only have been made by those who have had little or no intercourse with that people. On the contrary, I have been surprised at the degree of cheerfulness and vivacity which I found to prevail among them, and that not unfrequently under circumstances of considerable external depression and want. Their predominant character is that of unsuspecting

* Von Troil.

frankness, pious contentment, and a steady liveliness of temperament, combined with a strength of intellect and acuteness of mind seldom to be met with in other parts of the world. They have also been noted for the almost unconquerable attachment which they feel to their native island. With all their privations, and exposed, as they are, to numerous dangers from the operation of physical causes, they live under the practical influence of one of their common proverbs: *Island er hinn besta land sem solinn skinnar uppâ;* "Iceland is the best land on which the sun shines."

In the persons, habits, and customs of the present inhabitants of Iceland, we are furnished with a faithful picture of those exhibited by their Scandinavian ancestors. They adhere most rigidly to whatever has once been adopted as a national custom, and the few innovations that have been introduced by foreigners are scarcely visible beyond the immediate vicinity of their factories. Their language, dress, and mode of life, have been invariably the same during a period of nine centuries; whilst those of other nations have been subjected to numerous vicissitudes, according to the diversity of external circumstances, and the caprices of certain leading individuals, whose influence has been sufficiently powerful to impart a new tone to the society in which they moved. Habituated from their earliest years to hear of the character of their ancestors, and the asylum which their native island afforded to the sciences, when the rest of Europe was immersed in ignorance and barbarism, the Icelanders naturally possess a high degree of national feeling, and there is a certain dignity and boldness of carriage observable in numbers of the peasants, which at once indicates a strong sense of propriety and independence.

The Icelandic is justly regarded as the standard of the grand northern dialect of the Gothic language. While the Swedish and Danish, and even the Norwegian, which is a kind of middle dialect, have been more or less subject to the influence of the Teutonic or German branch, that, originally spoken in Scandinavia, has been preserved in all its purity in Iceland. In the middle ages, it was known by the

name of *Dönsk Tunga*, or the Danish Tongue; the Icelanders at first called it *Norræna*, because they had brought it along with them from Norway, which name pretty much resembles that of *Norns*, or *Norse*, by which the corrupt dialect, spoken till within these few years in some parts of Orkney, has been designated; and, it was not till after it had ceased to be spoken on the continent, that it assumed the name of Icelandic. The remoteness of the island, and the little intercourse which its inhabitants have maintained with the rest of the world, have effectually secured the purity and originality of this ancient language; and it is a curious fact, that while our ablest antiquaries are often puzzled, in endeavouring to decipher certain words and phrases in writings which date their origin only a few centuries back; there is not a peasant, nor indeed scarcely a servant girl in Iceland, who is not capable of reading with ease the most ancient documents extant on the island.

The early and successful application of the Icelanders to the study of the sciences, forms a perfect anomaly in the history of literature. At a period when the darkest gloom was spread over the European horizon, the inhabitants of this comparatively barren island, near the north pole, were cultivating the arts of poetry and history; and laying up stores of knowledge, which were not merely to supply posterity with data respecting the domestic and political affairs of their native country, but were also destined to furnish very ample and satisfactory information on a great multiplicity of important points connected with the history of other nations. To this a wonderful combination of circumstances proved favourable. The Norwegians, who first went over to Iceland, were sprung from some of the most distinguished families in the land of their nativity. They had been accustomed from their infancy to listen to the traditionary tale of the deeds of other years; they had frequented the public assemblies, where they saw the value and importance of knowledge; and, in the course of their numerous piratical expeditions and invasions, they had obtained an intimate acquaintance with the situation, politics, history, &c. of the

different countries of Europe. Being in the habit of clothing all events of any importance in poetic language, an accurate knowledge of these events was secured to posterity, while the share that some of themselves, or their immediate ancestors had had in many of them, naturally excited a desire to recite them in the family circle; and the undisturbed enjoyment of tranquillity, during a long winter of eight months continuance, afforded them the best opportunities of bending their attention to the study of the different branches of literature.

The art of writing * was first introduced into Iceland by Isleif, Bishop of Skalholt, about the year 1057; and the oldest monuments which we have of written composition, are the works of Ari Frode, who flourished about the same period. After the introduction of Christianity, several of the Icelanders went to France and Germany to prosecute their studies at the best universities of the age; but it is worthy of notice, that the writer just mentioned, and Snorro Sturluson, two of the most distinguished of the northern historians, never studied out of their native island. The historical compositions of the Icelanders, generally known by the name of Sagas, are exceedingly numerous, and many of them worthy of the fullest credit. The most valuable are: Heimskringla, Sturlunga, Eigla, Niâla, Gunnlauga, Eyrbyggia, Vatnsdœla, Orkneyinga, Landnâma, Kristni, Hungurvaka, and a great number of annals, the minuteness and simplicity of which furnish the strongest internal proof of their agreement with truth; and their authenticity is established by a multiplicity of the most satisfactory external evidence. On the pre-eminence of the Icelandic poets, it is not necessary to enlarge here, as a particular account will be given of them, and their compositions, in the third number of the Appendix.

The most flourishing period of Icelandic literature appears to have been from the beginning of the twelfth, till

* This is to be understood only of the regular use of the Latin characters; but it is evident from various parts of the Edda, and also of the Sagas, that the Runic characters were previously used for inscriptions on stones, &c.

about the middle of the fourteenth century. During the years immediately preceding the Reformation, the sciences were greatly on the decline; and, had it not been for the blaze of light which that most important event shed over the north of Europe, their cultivation in Iceland might have entirely grown into disuse. A fresh impulse, however, was thereby given to the sleeping energies of Icelandic genius, and a succession of literary characters followed, whose names would do honour to any country, or any age. One circumstance, which very much contributed to this revival of learning, was the introduction of printing. This took place about the year 1530. Jon Areson, the last Catholic Bishop of Holum, was a man of the most haughty and turbulent disposition, in consequence of which he was involved in numerous broils and disputes; and, being very ignorant of letters, he was at a loss for some person who could compose in Latin, and, at the same time, give publicity, by printing, to his orders and acts of excommunication; but prevailed at last upon Jon Matthieson, a native of Sweden, to go over and establish a printing-press on the island. The first printed book was the Breviarium Nidarosiense. The doctrines of the Reformation having been embraced by the Icelanders about ten years afterwards, the press fell into their hands, and was employed by them for the publication of the Bible, and other religious and useful books. Since that time they have always been in possession of a printing-press; but the one they have at present is of no use, being under the direction of an individual, whose sentiments are little accordant with those of his countrymen, on which account no person will purchase the publications which issued from it some years ago.

The three last centuries have produced many learned men; and, at the present day, Iceland can boast of sons who have risen to great eminence in the different departments of literature. Such as study at the University of Copenhagen, are generally distinguished from their fellow-students by their quickness of apprehension, their unwearied application, and their unsatiable thirst for the acquisition of knowledge.

On inquiring into the state of mental cultivation in Iceland, it is not so much the literary fame of a few select individuals, who have enjoyed superior advantages, which strikes our attention, as the universal diffusion of the general principles of knowledge among its inhabitants. Though there be only one school in Iceland, and that solitary school is exclusively designed for the education of such as are afterwards to fill offices in church or state; yet it is exceedingly rare to meet with a boy or girl, who has attained the age of nine or ten years, that cannot read and write with ease. Domestic education is most rigidly attended to; and it is no uncommon thing, to hear youths repeat passages from the Greek and Latin authors, who have never been farther than a few miles from the place where they were born. Nor do I scarcely ever recollect entering a hut, where I did not find some individual, or another, capable of entering into a conversation with me, on topics which would be reckoned altogether above the understandings of people in the same rank of society in other countries of Europe. On many occasions, indeed, the common Icelanders discover an acquaintance with the history and literature of other nations which is perfectly astonishing.

There is nothing which operates more powerfully on the formation of the human character than religion. According to the ideas which men entertain of the Supreme Being, the relation in which they stand to him and to each other, and a future state of retribution, will be the predominating bias and disposition of their minds, and the general tenor of their conduct in life. The religion adopted by the northern nations, some ages previous to the introduction of Christianity among them, was a religion of terror and of blood. There was nothing in it to mollify the mind of man, or instil into it the milk of human kindness. The deities they worshipped, were invested with the most ferocious and diabolical characters; and such only were supposed to merit their favourable regards as distinguished themselves in battle, and were thereby qualified for taking part in those warlike feats which

they expected to form the principal source of gratification in a future state.

The primeval system of religious belief among the Scandinavians was a kind of theism. They worshipped Thor, whom they regarded as the omnipotent thunderer, and the supreme disposer of human affairs. He appears to have been originally worshipped in the open air, in groves, or on some rising ground, where a large stone was erected as an altar, on which human sacrifices were offered to appease his wrath, and procure exemption from the direful effects of his vengeance. No traces are found of temples being constructed for the service of this deity, till after the introduction of a number of inferior gods into the Scandinavian creed, who were associated with Thor, as objects of religious fear and adoration.

This change is generally ascribed to Odin, a mighty Scythian warrior, who pushed his way through the south of Russia and Germany into Scandinavia. Spreading the terror of his arms wherever he came, and finding that his successes had inspired the people with the belief that he was a superhuman being, he improved on the idea, caused himself to be proclaimed a deity, and received divine honours from his followers. He was the god of war and victory, and was most significantly styled, "The Father of Slaughter and Desolation." Being represented as delighting in sanguinary combat, and beholding with complacency such as distinguished themselves by their courage and military prowess, his worshippers rushed on to the carnage, vowing they would send a certain number of souls to their deity in Valhalla, the abode of warriors, where they expected to meet all who had been slain with sword in hand, and pass the hours in an eternal round of conflict and conviviality. Freya, who presided over the seasons, and was regarded as the dispenser of fertility and riches; Niord, the ruler of the winds and seas; Brage, the god of eloquence and poetry; and a number of inferior deities, were now received by the northern nations, and had altars and temples erected for the celebration of their worship. But the veneration paid to Thor,

does not appear to have been in any degree diminished by this association. He was still considered as the most powerful and terrible of the gods; and the respect shewn to Odin, seems to have been greater in Denmark and Sweden than in the neighbouring country of Norway.

On the arrival of the Norwegians in Iceland, they immediately constructed temples, which they called Hofs, to Thor, and instituted the same rites that had obtained in their native country. Some of them carried over with them the wood of their Norwegian temples, and the very earth on which the altars had stood. A striking instance of this is mentioned in the Journal, where a description is given of one of the earliest and most celebrated of the heathen temples erected on that island, and the mode of sacrifice used on solemn occasions. Those who may wish to peruse a full and particular account of the mythology which prevailed among the northern nations, and of which the knowledge has been preserved and handed down to us by the Icelanders, are referred to Mallet's Northern Antiquities, where they will find the most satisfactory information on this subject, and many other points connected with the literary history of Scandinavia.

Little more than a century had elapsed from the colonization of the island, when an attempt was made to introduce the Christian religion among its inhabitants. In the year 981, Thorvald Kodranson proceeded on a piratical expedition to Germany, and happening to meet a Bishop in Saxony, named Frederick, he was baptized by him, and spent some time in his house; after which he prevailed on the Bishop to accompany him to Iceland, in order to preach the new doctrine, and baptize his parents, and any other of his friends who might be disposed to become Christians. They made the tour of the island together; and as the Bishop was ignorant of the language, the office of interpreter devolved on Thorvald, who manifested great zeal in his endeavours to convert his countrymen to the faith of Christ. But his conduct appears to have been little calculated to inspire them with love to that religion which he professed to

have embraced; for, on a certain occasion, he did not scruple to kill two of them for having circulated a satirical verse which had been composed on him and the Bishop, and they both quitted the island shortly after, not having met with that success which they had anticipated. However, although few received baptism, a number of the inhabitants in the northern quarter absented themselves from the temples, broke in pieces their idols, and refused any longer to pay the customary tax in support of idolatrous worship; and the first church was built by Thorvard Spakbödvarson, at *As*, in the year 984, in spite of the opposition and threatenings of his heathen neighbours.

Thorvald was succeeded by one Stefner, whom Olave, King of Norway, sent over, A. D. 996, for the express purpose of converting the Icelanders to the Christian faith; but he appears to have met with as little success as his predecessor; only the subject became more generally known, and certain regulations, which were adopted at the national assembly, for preventing the spread of innovation, had a tendency to excite discussion among the inhabitants.

Olave next dispatched a priest, named Thangbrand, on this important mission; and though the heathen used every effort in opposing the progress of his work, and employed several of their best poets to assault him with the keenest invective, he succeeded in baptizing a number of them. Severe fines were now imposed upon such as turned Christians, and some were obliged to quit the island on account of the persecution which was raised against them.

At last, in the year 1000, two of those who had been exiled, Hiallti and Gissur, returned to Iceland, with the full determination of advocating the cause of Christianity in the presence of their countrymen. They arrived at the time of the general assembly, and proceeded instantly thither, where they were welcomed by their friends, who defended them against an attack which was meditated by the pagans. The following day they went in solemn procession to the Lögberg, accompanied by seven men, dressed in sacerdotal garments, and carrying large crosses in their hands. The whole

assembly was struck with the novelty of the scene; and, after Hiallti had offered incense, he and Gissur began to point out the superiority of Christianity to Heathenism in so bold and intrepid a manner, that none of their enemies had the courage to contradict them. The consequence was, that such as were brought to the determination of changing their religion, took witnesses to that effect; and, separating from their heathen countrymen, they joined the party that had professed the faith of Christ. While thus engaged, intelligence was brought to the assembly, that a volcanic eruption had commenced at no great distance, which the heathen immediately ascribed to the indignation of the gods at the defection of such numbers from their ancient creed. "Can it be matter of surprise," they exclaimed, "that the gods should be angry at such speeches as those we have now heard?" With this question they hoped to silence the advocates of the Christian religion, and prevent any more of their countrymen from embracing it; but Snorro Goda, though still a pagan, was so struck with the inconclusiveness of the argument, that, referring them to the streams of lava in the midst of which the assembly was held, and which had visibly flowed long before the island was inhabited, he pointedly asked them, "At what then were the gods angry, at the period when the very lava on which we now stand was burning?" No answer having been made, the assembly broke up, and such as had espoused the new faith petitioned that laws should be enacted for securing to them the peaceable profession of their religion.

The Heathen now began to institute a solemn appeal to their gods, and resolved to offer, as an expiatory sacrifice, two human victims from each quarter of the island, that the Christian religion might not be permitted to spread over the whole country. On which Hiallti and Gissur convoked an assembly of the Christians, and proposed that an equal number of their party should devote themselves as martyrs to the honour of their Redeemer; and, to stimulate their zeal, Hiallti himself came forward and offered to lay down his life in support of the Christian cause.

The following day, Thorgeir, at that time supreme magistrate, convened the assembly for the purpose of bringing the dispute to a termination. He pointed out to them the pernicious consequences which were likely to arise from their having two distinct codes, and advised them to the exercise of mutual toleration under the protection of the same common laws. The effect produced by his speech was so great, that both parties agreed to abide by whatever decision he should give in the case. He therefore enacted, that all the inhabitants of Iceland should be baptized, and worship one God; that such as were still inclined to offer sacrifice should do it privately; but that the ancient regulations should still be in force respecting the exposition of infants,* and the eating of horse-flesh. The rite of baptism was now administered to the whole population of the island at the hot-baths, which they preferred to immersion in cold water.†

Measures were now taken to provide the inhabitants with places of worship; and a number of priests were ordained to conduct it according to the forms of the church of Rome. At first they were under the inspection of foreign bishops; but, in the year 1057, Isleif, a native Icelander, who had studied some time at the university of Erfurt, was installed into the see of Skalholt, where he exercised the episcopal office till his death, A. D. 1080, when he was succeeded by his son Gissur. This prelate having instituted a regular system of tithes, found that the island was able to support more than one bishop; and, consulting the good of the ec-

* Such as did not choose to bring up their children were at liberty to expose them; and the practice was very common in regard to female infants, especially if there happened to be many young females in a family. They wrapped the child carefully up in a cloth, put a piece of meat into its mouth, and either concealed it under the roots of a tree, or between two stones, which they covered with a third, in order to prevent any beast from devouring it. From the instances on record of this inhuman custom, it appears in almost every case to have originated with the father; that there was frequently a long dispute ere the female parent would consent to surrender her beloved offspring; and no doubt many a stolen visit was paid to the spot, where the dear babe was brought to so untimely an end. *Hist. Eccles. Island.* tom. i. p. 68.

† See Kristni Saga, cap. xii.

clesiastical establishment more than his own private emolument, he readily complied with a request which had been made by the inhabitants of the north, that they might have a bishop of their own for the more convenient administration of church-affairs. Another episcopate was accordingly erected at Holum, and the office was first conferred upon Jon Ögmundson in the year 1107. The Icelandic bishops were originally under the Archbishop of Bremen; they afterwards became subject to the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Lund in Sweden, and were ultimately suffragans of the Archbishop of Drontheim in Norway. * The first code of ecclesiastical law was that known by the name of *Jus Ecclesiasticum Grimkelianum*, but this was revised and augmented in the year 1123, when it was introduced as the standing law of the Icelandic church.

It might naturally have been expected, that the immense distance of Iceland from the immediate seat of the Papal government would, in a great measure, have secured its inhabitants from the introduction of those superstitious and ridiculous ceremonies which were at that time palmed upon the world, instead of the purity and simplicity of primitive Christianity; at least, it was not so likely that these evils should gain the same ground, or spread to the same extent that they did in other countries, the contiguity of which to Rome exposed them to continual usurpations on the part of that power. But these fond conjectures are contradicted by historical facts. The Icelanders appear to have equalled the blindest of their fellow-devotees in their attachment to the hierarchy, and their unqualified adoption of its grossest absurdities; in consequence of which, a great portion of their original heathenism was retained under a new form, and they continued the dupes of the most abject superstition. Several of them undertook pilgrimages to Rome; and considerable sums were raised for carrying on the Crusades. Saints and reliques were held in the greatest veneration. Voluntary contributions were made for the erection of mo-

* Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. i. p. 104.

nasteries; and the Papal Nuncio for the northern kingdoms of Europe kept an agent in Iceland for the sale of indulgences.

In this state did the island continue during the long period of five centuries. But Christian III. on the establishment of the Protestant religion in Denmark, issued orders that the Papal authority should be put down, and that the pure doctrines of the Gospel should be preached in Iceland, instead of the fables and legends which had hitherto occupied the religious creed of its inhabitants. Considerable opposition was made on the part of the clergy, especially by Jon Areson, Bishop of Holum, who endeavoured to throw every possible obstacle in the way of the Reformation; and, arming a body of men, he proceeded to the south, and arrested the Bishop of Skalholt, but was taken soon afterwards by the King's officers, and beheaded for various crimes which he had committed. In the year 1551, the Reformation was fully introduced into Iceland; and, in the course of a short time, the doctrines of the New Testament became generally known among the inhabitants.

The form and ceremonies of the Icelandic church are strictly Lutheran, though, from the poverty of the people, their churches are less elegant, and a greater degree of simplicity pervades their worship than I have found in other Lutheran countries. Formerly there were two bishops, one at Skalholt, and the other at Holum; but, in the year 1797, the bishoprics were united, and an episcopal see erected at Reykiavik for the whole island. The next ecclesiastical dignitary to the bishop is the archdeacon, who supplies his place in case of sickness, or a vacancy of the see; and there are, besides, eighteen provosts or deans, each of whom has the superintendence of the clergy within the limits of his district. The total number of parishes in Iceland amounts to 184; but as many of them occupy a great space of ground, it has been found necessary to build in some parts two or three churches in a parish, which has increased the number of churches to 305. Some of the priests have chaplains to assist them in the performance of public duty. They are

all natives of the island, and are maintained partly by cultivating small glebes attached to the churches, and partly from certain tithes raised among the peasants. The provision made for their support is exceedingly scanty. The richest living on the island does not produce 200 rix-dollars; twenty and thirty rix-dollars are the whole of the stipend annexed to many of the parishes; and there are some in which it is even as low as five.

Small as the pittance is which is thus afforded to the Icelandic clergy, and much as their attention must be directed to the management of their farms, they are, nevertheless, in general, very assiduous in the discharge of their public functions, and particularly attentive to the education of the young. Every clergyman in Iceland keeps what is called a register of souls, which contains an accurate statement of the age, situation, conduct, abilities, and proficiency of each individual in his parish. The books in the possession of the family are also entered on the list; and, as this record is made annually, to be presented to the dean at his visitation, a regular view is thus obtained of the moral and religious state of the parish.

Previous to the union of the bishopries, the Icelandic church had two consistories, or ecclesiastical courts, one of which was held annually at Flygamire for the northern, and the other at Thingvalla for the southern diocese; but they are now combined in the *Synodalrett*, or Synod, which meets about the middle of July every year at Reykiavik. It consists of the bishop, the governor, the archdeacon, two or three of the deans in rotation, and certain individuals among the inferior clergy. In cases coming before this court, the bishop has the casting-vote in every thing relative to doctrine or ecclesiastical privileges, and the governor in matters of civil concernment. The principal business transacted on these occasions regards the distribution of certain monies, which are annually granted by government for relieving the widows of the clergy, and augmenting the scantier stipends of the priests. About 300 rix-dollars is appropriated to each of these purposes.

In regard to sentiment and style of preaching, the Icelandic clergy may be divided into two classes; those of the old, and such as are of the new school. The former profess to receive the Bible as an authoritative and obligatory revelation of the will of God, and bow with reverence to its decisions. They do not exalt human reason to be the arbiter of what ought, and what ought not to be embraced as dogmas of faith; but, conscious of their ignorance and proneness to error, they consider it at once their duty and their privilege, to believe whatever God has been pleased to communicate in his word. Accordingly, in their sermons, they insist on the grand distinguishing doctrines of Christianity: the total depravity and helplessness of man; the eternal divinity, and vicarious atonement of the Son of God; the personality, and saving operations of the Holy Spirit; the necessity of regeneration, and holiness of life; and the eternity of future punishment. I had an opportunity of meeting with many of these men in the course of my travels; and some of them, whom I heard from the pulpit, convinced me, that they were themselves deeply penetrated with a sense of the importance of those truths which they were engaged in preaching to others; that they had entered the ministry from no worldly motive, but were actuated by a sincere desire to advance the spiritual reign of their Divine Master, and promote the best interests of their fellow-men; and that they were living under a habitual impression of that solemn account which all, who have taken upon them the charge of souls, will have to give to the Chief Shepherd at the day of final decision. They are men who are dead to the world, and devoted in heart and life to the service of their Redeemer. Their private walk exhibits the genuine tendency of the holy doctrines they teach; and their public discourses are earnest, energetic, animated, pointed, and faithful.

Such of the clergy as are of the new school, the number of whom is happily not very great, treat divine things in quite a different manner. Instead of drawing the matter of their sermons from the Scriptures, they gather it from the writings of heathen philosophers; and the morality found

in these authors, which, at the best, is but dry and insipid, absolutely freezes when transplanted into Iceland. The divine inspiration of the Bible is discarded, and all the cardinal and fundamental points of the Christian faith are either entirely omitted, or when they are brought forward, it is only with a view to turn them into ridicule. The influence of such Socinian and semi-deistical principles on the individuals who propagate them, is abundantly manifest. They are entirely men of the world. The awful realities of an approaching eternity have made no suitable impression upon their minds, and levity, callousness, and indifference, mark the whole of their conduct. Nor are the effects resulting from the dissemination of their tenets, on such as imbibe them, less visible and injurious. Their minds become imbued with scepticism and infidelity; every vestige of religion disappears, and immorality of one description or another generally occupies its place.

In their general habits and dispositions, the Icelanders are a very moral and religious people. They are carefully instructed in the principles of Christianity at an early period of life, and regularly attend to the public and private exercises of devotion. Instances of immorality are in a great measure confined to such as frequent the fishing places, where they are often idle for days together; and where such as have made proficiency in wickedness, use every effort to ensnare and corrupt their young and inexperienced companions. In passing through the island, my stay at any particular place was too short to admit of my ascertaining the true state of vital and practical religion among its inhabitants; yet, making every allowance for the proneness of men to content themselves with a mere external form of godliness, and granting that there is often a correct moral deportment, without a single particle of love to God in the heart, I cannot but indulge the conviction, that in a country where the principles of revealed truth are so clearly and so generally known, and where the tone of morals is so high, there must be many whose minds have been savingly impressed with divine things, and who have experienced the

Gospel to be "the power of God unto salvation." The greater number of these individuals are in all probability known only to God, having little or no intercourse with each other; and their situation may not unfitly be compared to that of the generality of real Christians in Scotland about thirty or forty years ago, when none of those institutions existed which now draw them together, make them acquainted with each other, and stimulate them to greater zeal and diligence in the service of their blessed Redeemer.

It may appear strange, that such a degree of religious knowledge should exist in a country where, of late years, few have had immediate access to the Holy Scriptures; but it is accounted for by the circumstance, that almost every family is in possession of a volume of excellent sermons, written by Bishop Vidalin of Skalholt, about the beginning of last century, which contains a great deal of Scripture illustration, and that numerous passages from the sacred writings are produced in proof of the doctrines taught in the Icelandic catechism. The scarcity of Bibles was severely felt. Numbers had been using every possible exertion, for a long series of years, to procure a copy of the sacred volume, but without effect. The poverty of the inhabitants was such, that they could not print a new edition themselves; they did not know to what quarter to apply for aid; and many began to apprehend that the word of the Lord would become extinct among them, and especially that their posterity would be left destitute of this inestimable boon. But here foreign benevolence came most opportunely to their aid. The plentiful supply of the Scriptures sent them by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and other friends to the best interests of humanity, was most joyfully and gratefully received; and while the Icelanders are now diligently employed in perusing the records of eternal life, their ardent prayers are ascending to heaven for the present and eternal happiness of their spiritual benefactors.

ICELAND,

&c. &c.

CHAP. I.

Voyage from Copenhagen to Iceland—Copenhagen Roads—Island of Hveen—Tycho Brahe—Elsineur—Gottenburgh—Shetland—Ice Mountains—Cape Reykiancss—Land at Reykiavik—Description of the Town—Visit to the Archdeacon at Gardè—Hafnarfiord—Preparations for an Inland Journey—Divine Service in the Cathedral.

HAVING, by the blessing of God, brought the printing of the Icelandic Scriptures to a termination, and seen the foundation laid of a Bible Society for the Danish dominions, on the principles of the British and Foreign Bible Society, I began to make the necessary arrangements for my voyage to Iceland. The natural formation of that island rendering it impossible to convey any quantity of Bibles from one place to another, it was requisite to forward a proportionate number to each harbour. In the execution of this measure, I would here acknowledge my obligations to the Icelandic merchants in Copenhagen, who not only allowed the copies to be sent by their respective vessels without charging any freight, but furnished me with much important information, derived from their local knowledge of the country. To Westy Petræus, Esq. in particular, I am deeply indebted for the facilities which he afforded me on the occasion, and

for conveying, in his own vessel, no less than 1183 Bibles and 1668 New Testaments, free of expense.

On the 8th of June, 1814, I embarked on board the Seyen, commanded by Captain Petraeus, brother to the gentleman just mentioned, who also accompanied us, and did every thing in his power to provide for my accommodation and comfort. We got under weigh about five o'clock, P. M. The evening was serene; and the prospect, which embraced the Danish metropolis, the two opposite coasts of Zealand and Scania, and the island of Hveen, was extremely picturesque and beautiful, and peculiarly calculated to inspire the mind with a train of delightful meditations. Lifting up my heart to Him who dwelleth on high, I implored his blessing on the important undertaking in which I had embarked, and prayed that he would graciously be pleased to render the precious seed which I was honoured to carry over to a distant island, productive of a most luxuriant harvest.

There was something peculiarly gratifying in the idea, that our vessel, instead of proceeding on any predatory or murderous expedition, was freighted with provisions for the inhabitants of a barren island; grain, and other articles for the support of temporal life; and the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, the germ and staff of spiritual existence. Considering every circumstance, I could not help viewing the following lines of Cowper as strikingly appropriate:—

> "Soft airs, and gentle heavings of the wave,
> Impel the fleet, whose errand is to save,
> To succour wasted regions, and replace
> The smile of opulence in sorrow's face.
> Let nothing adverse, nothing unforeseen,
> Impede the bark that plows the deep serene,
> Charg'd with a freight, transcending in its worth
> The gems of India, nature's rarest birth,
> That flies, like Gabriel on his Lord's commands,
> An herald of God's love to Pagan lands."

Not, however, that I regarded Iceland as a pagan land. On the contrary, from all that I had been able to learn, I

was persuaded that there were few places in Europe where Christianity is professed, to which the epithet could with less justice be applied, than to that island, notwithstanding its manifold local disadvantages. Yet, as genuine Christianity can only be maintained by the continued propagation of its principles, of which the Bible is the repository, it is evident the Icelanders must soon have made a retrograde motion, had not measures been adopted for providing them with a fresh supply of the Holy Scriptures.

Early the following morning, we passed the island of *Hveen*, famous on account of its having been the residence of the celebrated astronomer Tycho Brahe. A more eligible spot he could not perhaps have found, as the island lies high, and the coasts on both sides being low, a most extensive horizon presents itself to the view. The observatory, which he erected here, and to which, from its destination, he gave the name of *Uraniaborg*, was raised at great expense, part of which was borne by the King of Denmark, and the rest defrayed by the astronomer himself. He is said to have expended no less than 100,000 rix-dollars on its erection. It was not only built in a highly ornamental style, but regularly fortified; yet it did not remain in a perfect state for more than twenty years, and now there is scarcely a single vestige remaining to tell the inquisitive traveller where it stood. Some years ago, I recollect having spent a night here with Major Stuart, a natural son of the Pretender, in whose possession the place at that time was; but all I could discover was merely the remainder of a vault, and a few slight traces of the fortification. Its history, in connection with that of its master, furnishes a striking lesson of the uncertainty and vicissitude of every sublunary object.

About nine o'clock we made *Elsineur*, which, with the castle of *Cronborg*, we passed on the one hand, while we left behind us the town of *Helsingborg*, in Sweden, on the other. The two countries are divided here only by the Sound, (Öresund), which does not exceed four British miles in breadth. In times of peace, *Elsineur* roads are crowded with the flags of all nations, it being necessary for every

vessel to call on passing, in order to pay the Sound dues In consequence of an unremitting influx of strangers from all parts of the busy world, most of whom had no other object in view than the acquisition of earthly riches, that town used to present a melancholy spectacle of indifference to the momentous concerns of religion. Adversity, however, has a natural tendency to generate reflection; and we may indulge the hope, that the severe stroke with which its inhabitants have been visited by the total failure of their resources for these last seven years, has not been without effect in leading many to turn their attention to the things which belong to their everlasting peace.

From *Elsincur*, we proceeded in company with upwards of seventy vessels into the Cattagat, in which, for the two following days, we had either calms or contrary winds, so that we made but little progress; but a fresh breeze sprung up on the 12th, which carried us into the harbour of Wrangö, a few miles below *Gottenburgh*. We were under the necessity of putting in here, in order to wait for a Swedish convoy-ship to take us past Norway: the Swedes not being without suspicions that our going to Iceland was merely a pretence, and that it was our real intention to supply the Norwegians with grain. By this means we were detained more than twelve days; but to me the loss was amply compensated, by the opportunities that were afforded me of visiting my friends in *Gottenburgh*. Our interviews were short, yet highly interesting, and tended in no small degree to strengthen those bonds of Christian love, which no length of time shall ever be able to dissolve. The Bible Society, which had been formed at this place, towards the close of the former year, by the active and enlightened zeal of the late Rev. Dr Brunmark, was going on prosperously: only it was with concern I learned that they were soon to lose one of their valuable secretaries, my dear and much respected friend, the Rev. Professor Rosen, who was about to enter on a living to which he had lately been presented in the country.

On the 21st we left the Swedish coast, in company with

a large fleet, that proceeded under the same convoy to the westward. We had scarcely got clear of *Marstrand Castle*, when it blew a violent gale of wind, which lasted several hours, and completely dispersed the convoy. It was succeeded by a series of calms, in which we had ample room for the exercise of patience; and it was not before the evening of the 30th, that we descried *Fair Isle*, and the eastern coast of *Shetland*. We entertained the fullest expectation, of being able the same night to pass, what the seamen call "The Hole," *i. e.* between the islands just mentioned; but the wind veered round to the N. W. and increased, during the night, to such a degree, that we were driven back to the eastward of the Orkneys. The sight of my native country excited the tenderest emotions in my mind, and nothing but the importance of the mission on which I was proceeding, could have reconciled me to the idea of passing it without paying it a visit.

The first view we obtained of *Iceland*, was on the evening of the 12th of July. At the distance of forty miles we could discover some of the Ice Mountains, towering to an immense height in the horizon, surrounded below with clouds, and completely covered with snow. From about the middle of the highest, a black rugged ridge commenced, which continued to dip gradually towards the west, till it was intercepted by two small conical snow-capped mountains, that bore the most perfect resemblance to sugar loaves. When the tediousness of the voyage is taken into consideration, an allowance will easily be made for my attaching the idea of beauty to these masses of perennial snow, notwithstanding the revolting presentiment of cold which necessarily forced itself into my mind. The weather becoming foggy, we lost sight of the land for the two following days; but on the morning of the 15th, we descried a high land directly a-head, and, on its clearing up about nine o'clock, we were happy to find we had made the south-west extremity of the island, or *Cape Reykianess*, which it was necessary for us to pass, before we could reach *Reykiavik*, the place of our destination. On the left we had the *Eldeyar*, or Fire Islands;

so called from their having been thrown up at different periods by the agency of submarine volcanoes. They consist entirely of barren and precipitous rocks, and are almost always covered with sea-fowl, on which account the Danish traders have given them the name of *Fugleskierene*. Passing between the innermost of these rocks and the Cape, which is also of volcanic origin, and presents a very bold and rugged appearance, we were rapidly carried by the tide into the Faxè Fiord,* and, having now got into smooth water, and both wind and current being in our favour, the close of our voyage was the most agreeable that can be imagined.

As we sailed along, I was delighted by the successive opening of the creeks and bays on our right, and especially the discovery of *Hafnarfiord*, the school of *Bessastad*, the *Ness*, and other places in the vicinity of *Reykiavik*. Nor was my curiosity less gratified by the survey of the *Esian*, *Akkra*, and other mountains on the left side of the bay. Their lofty height, the beautiful girdle of silver clouds that surrounded them considerably below the top, the magnificent appearance of the summit above, and the solemn gloom which covered the inferior regions:—all conspired to impress the mind with reverential and admiring ideas of that Power who laid the foundations of the earth, and at whose wrath the mountains tremble and shake. About eight in the evening, we got our pilot on board, when a number of reciprocal inquiries took place; and a little past ten we anchored before the town of *Reykiavik*, where the Danish flag was displayed from the tops of the mercantile houses, in honour of our arrival. The first act of kindness shewn us by the natives, was their mounting us on their shoulders, and carrying us ashore from the boat. On landing, we were met by a crowd of men, women, and children, who filled the air with the exclamations, "Peace! come in peace! the Lord bless you!" &c. salutations that were at once calculated to prepossess a stranger in favour of the religious disposition

* *Faxè* signifies a bay or fish.

of the Icelanders. At the head of the beach we were met by the superior class of the inhabitants, by whom we were welcomed to the island, and among whom I was happy to recognise some of my own countrymen. We then proceeded to the house of Mr Knudsen, the partner of Mr Petræus, where we made an excellent supper on fresh salmon, and returned on board about one o'clock in the morning.

The day after my arrival was principally occupied in getting my luggage ashore from the vessel, and paying my respects to the Right Rev. the Bishop of Iceland, His Excellency the Governor, the Landfoged, and others, who, in the warmest terms, expressed their approbation of the object I had in view, in visiting the island. The bishop in particular, to whom I was favoured with a letter of introduction from the Right Rev. the Bishop of Zealand, testified his conviction of the great good that would result from the present instance of foreign benevolence; confirmed the accounts that had already been received by the Bible Society, respecting the extreme want of the Scriptures on the island; declared how sensible he was of the obligations under which his countrymen lay to their spiritual benefactors; and kindly promised to render me every assistance in his power, towards facilitating the attainment of my object.

Reykiavik, which, about fifty years ago, consisted merely of a few houses, has lately risen into some notice, having become the residence of the governor, the Episcopal see, the seat of the Supreme Court of Judicature, and the principal mercantile station on the island. It is situated on the south side of a considerable inlet of the Faxè Fiord, upon a low marshy ground, between two eminences that are partially covered with grass, and studded with a number of small cottages. It consists of two streets, the longer of which, built only on the one side, stretches along the shore, and is entirely occupied by the merchants: the other, which strikes off at the west end of the town, and runs almost in a direct line back to the margin of a small lake, contains the houses of the Bishop, Landfoged, and others not immediately engaged in trade. About the middle of this street, on the

east side, lies the public burying-ground, which is neatly enclosed with a new earthen wall, and has two gates, one to the street, and the other at the south-east corner opposite to the church. At the east end of the town, behind the range of houses along the beach, and in a parallel line with them, are the houses of the Governor, and Sysselmand; and a little behind these, to the south-west, is the church, which stands by itself, on a gentle rise of the green, occupying the space between the town and the lake. It is a heavy building of stone, and might make a commodious place of worship, were it not that the roof, which is covered with red tiles, is sadly out of repair, and it is not without danger that the congregation assemble in it in stormy weather. On the rising ground at the end of the governor's house, from which it is separated by a small rivulet, lies the house of correction, a large white-washed stone building, which, at a distance, has the most respectable appearance of any about the place. The dwelling-houses, with two exceptions, are all constructed of wood in the Norwegian fashion, and have generally a storehouse or two, and a small garden attached to them. On the height to the west is the observatory, a small building of wood; and on the summit of the opposite eminence stands the school monument, which the students have raised with much pains from the calcined stones in the vicinity. At a short distance in the bay, are several small islands, the principal of which is *Videy*, which, on account of its agreeable situation, the richness of its pasture, and the number of eider-ducks that annually frequent it, is reckoned superior to any other spot in the southern parts of the island. It was formerly famous for its monastery, founded in the year 1226, but belongs at present to the crown, and is occupied by Chief Justice Stephenson. In many places it rests on beautiful pillars of basaltic lava, which, in conjunction with the crater a little to the west of the houses, leaves no room to doubt of its having been thrown up by a submarine volcano. Similar appearances are visible on the opposite coast near Reykiavik, where are also some hot springs, from which the bay most probably derives its name.

It is rather a striking coincidence, that the capital of Iceland should, as it were, by mere accident, happen to be built on the very spot where Ingolf, the first of the Norwegian emigrants that settled on the island, fixed his habitation. In conformity to a superstitious practice common in those days, that adventurer, on approaching the eastern coast, threw the principal wooden pillars of his former habitation into the sea, vowing he would settle wherever they were cast on shore. After some time, his slaves, whom he sent in search of them, found them driven up at this place, and Ingolf, true to his vow, fixed his abode at *Reykiavik*, though reproached by his own slaves for preferring so rugged and barren a spot to the fine districts they had passed on their way from the east. *

On the 17th I rode, in company with my friend Mr Petræus, to *Gardè*, the residence of the very Rev. Marcus Magnusson, the archdeacon of Iceland, and dean of Guldbringè and Kiosar Syssels. In our way we fell in with the first effects I had seen of subterraneous fire—a tract of lava, rugged and wild, which, at first sight, threatened to put a stop to our journey. To whatever side we turned, nothing presented itself to our view but the dismal ruins of mountains, which have been so completely convulsed by the reciprocal contention of the elements beneath, that, after having emitted immense quantities of lava, their foundations have given way, and the whole structure has fallen in, and continued to burn till the more fusible parts were entirely calcined. Large masses of rock, which one would scarcely suppose had been affected by fire, lie intermingled with the lava, which has burned with the most dreadful violence. These ruins are scattered in every direction, and assume the most forbidding and gloomy aspect. Having gained the summit of the hill to the west of the lava, a more agreeable prospect presented itself. *Gardè*, from which this lava takes the name of *Gardè-hraun*,† lay directly before us: and, a

* Landnâmsbok. Part I. cap. 6, 7, 8.

† *Hraun*, pronounced *Hrogn*, is the Icelandic for lava, and properly signifies a rough and rugged tract formed by melting or precipitation.

little to the right, the narrow peninsula of *Alftaness*, which juts out into the *Hafnerfiord*, and is adorned with the church and school of *Bessastad*, and a number of beautiful cottages. Besides the church, a pretty large building of wood, *Garde* consists of several small houses, most of which are occupied by the archdeacon. On our arrival, he met us at the door, and gave us a welcome reception. After some desultory conversation, we came to the subject of the Scriptures; and I was happy to be informed, that the copies of the New Testament that had been sent him in 1812, had soon been disposed of, and that the desire of obtaining them was at last so keen, that the peasants would have paid double the price, if it had only been in their power to obtain them. He produced a specimen of the high estimation in which the Divine oracles are held by the Icelanders, and the assiduity with which they apply to the study of them. It was a copy of the Bible in folio, a great part of which had been devoured by the tooth of time; but the defective pages had all been replaced, and the text supplied in the most accurate manner. The hand-writing was such as would do honour to any writing-master in Europe. On my putting the question, whether it had not been written by a clergyman, or some other person in a public capacity, I was told, to my no small surprise, that it had been done by a common peasant, and that such instances of elegant penmanship are by no means uncommon in Iceland.

Having received, from the archdeacon, repeated assurances of assistance in the prosecution of my object, we left *Garde*, and rode over a rough stream of lava to *Hafnarfiord*, which is situated on the north side of the bay of the same name and near its termination. Just before coming to the harbour, as we were scrambling over the sharp crusts of the broken bubbles of lava, some of which were upwards of fifteen feet in height, I received peculiar gratification from the sight of a small hamlet neatly built of lava, and a garden in full verdure, which lay in the heart of one of these. This spot is completely sheltered from wintry blasts by the lofty walls formed by the surrounding crust, and has a fine south-

ern exposure. The scenery was strikingly grotesque; and the contrast between the verdure and regularity observable in the garden, and the blackness and distorted forms of the lava, was inimitably grand. *Hafnarfiord* consists only of two mercantile houses, with their store-houses, and a few cottages inhabited by the working people. It is, however, remarkable, on account of its dry dock, which owes its erection to the enterprising spirit of Mr Sivertsen, and is the only thing of the kind on the island. We were here kindly received by that gentleman, who is already known to the friends of the Bible Society by the share he took in the distribution and sale of the New Testaments sent over in 1812. On our return to *Reykiavik*, the way led us through a tract of the lava still more horrific than that described above. The road, which in most places did not exceed the breadth of an ordinary foot-path, was so filled with sharp-pointed pieces of lava, that our poor horses could only proceed by cautiously stepping over one stone after another; and every now and then we were annoyed by large masses jutting out from the sides, which threatened to lacerate our feet, or, if we were off our guard, to precipitate us from our horses. Besides melted masses, resembling those on the other side of the tract, we encountered large and dangerous chasms, between which, at times, there was scarcely sufficient space left for our horses to pass. The gloom of night added to the horrors of the scene, and it was not without the most powerful apprehension of danger that we reached the opposite side of the tract. We arrived in town about one o'clock in the morning.

On my arrival in Iceland, it was with deep regret I learned, that the most favourable opportunity for the distribution of the Bibles and New Testaments this season was irretrievably lost. Had I come a month sooner, I should have arrived in the very middle of what is called the *Handels-tid*, or period of traffic, when several hundreds of the inhabitants repair to this place from all quarters of the island, and barter their home productions for foreign commodities and articles of necessary use for the winter. They had now

all returned to their respective abodes, and there was no other way of acquainting them with the supply that had arrived, except by sending an express to the different corners, or travelling myself around the coast. The latter mode I preferred, on various accounts, as I should thereby have it in my power to ascertain the actual wants of the people in a spiritual point of view; leave copies as specimens on passing along; visit the different sea-ports, to which copies of the Scriptures had been forwarded from Copenhagen, and make the necessary arrangements with the merchants and others for their circulation in the vicinity; and especially, as there was reason to hope, that, by the blessing of God on my conversation with such of the clergy as should fall in my way, I might be the humble instrument of stirring them up to greater diligence and zeal in the work of the Lord, by informing them of the present appearances with respect to religion abroad, the lively interest which Christians of all denominations take in its diffusion, and the energetic and successful means employed by them for that purpose. Their entire exclusion, by invincible local circumstances, from almost all access to the sources of religious intelligence, has a necessary tendency to engender a partial coldness and indifference about the common interests of the gospel, and to render this part of the vineyard of Christ which they occupy, frigid and barren as the island they inhabit. A visit from a stranger, especially one who travelled among them with the end I had in view, would, it was presumed, excite a more lively concern about the Holy Scriptures, and thus contribute to advance the cause of pure and undefiled religion.

My journey being therefore determined on, it now became a question, whether I ought to proceed directly across the desert and uninhabited tract in the interior, to the northern parts of the island, and then pursue my route along the coast, back to this place; or visit the coast first, and then return across the mountains. After consulting my friends, and maturely weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the different routes, I was induced to adopt the former:

chiefly from the consideration, that Captain Von Scheel,* one of the Danish officers employed in surveying the coasts, was to proceed in that direction in the course of a few days, and that I would derive much valuable information and advice from him relative to a variety of subjects with which I was necessarily unacquainted. On my communicating my wishes to that gentleman, he very kindly expressed his happiness in having me for a companion, and we accordingly fixed on the 25th as the day of our departure.

The intermediate days were taken up in making the necessary preparations, and adopting certain measures for the circulation of the Scriptures in the southern districts during my absence. Travelling in Iceland is attended with much more trouble and difficulty than in any other part of Europe. Here there is neither coach nor curricle, cart nor waggon, for the conveyance of one's person and baggage. Every thing is carried on horseback. The first thing, therefore, that a traveller has to think of, is the procuring of horses, which he may either hire or purchase; but the latter mode is preferable, as in that case he has them more at his command; and it is also attended with less expense, especially if the journey be of any length. The common horses, called by the natives *puls* or *klifiahestar*, i. e. horses of burden, are at present sold for twenty-five or thirty shillings; and a good riding horse, (Icel. *rid-hestr*) costs upwards of five pounds sterling. They are in general from thirteen to fourteen hands high, strongly made, lively, persevering, and carry from sixteen to twenty stones weight, the distance of a *Thingmannaleid*,† every day. In breaking such as they design for the saddle, the natives make it their grand object to inure them to a short easy amble, at which many of them advance with almost incredible swiftness. As there are no inns on the island, the traveller must also provide himself with a tent, which is the more necessary

* Now Major, and Knight of the Dannebrog.

† A *Thingmannaleid* is the distance the natives were accustomed to travel each day when they rode to the *Althing*, or General Assembly, and makes at an average twenty-five British miles.

on account of the deserts he has sometimes to traverse, and even at the farms he will prefer it to the best accommodations that may be offered him. A good experienced *Fylgimadr*, or guide, is the next requisite, and, if the cavalcade be large, a *Lestamadr* to take care of the horses and baggage is equally necessary. Travelling chests must also be procured, together with provisions, and small money, with which to reward any trivial services that may be shewn by the peasants. For those who penetrate into the interior, a compass is indispensable, as they are apt to get bewildered in snowy or foggy weather; and if they do not keep in the proper direction, may easily wander into deserts, where both themselves and their horses must perish with hunger.

On the 24th, which was the Lord's day, I attended worship in the Cathedral. The service was begun by the Archdeacon, who had come to town on purpose to place a new minister. After finishing the liturgical service at the altar, he ascended the pulpit and pronounced a short prayer, and then read the gospel for the day, on which he also founded his discourse. As it was the first Icelandic sermon I had ever heard, it was not to be expected I should understand every word. Indeed, there were almost whole sentences, in which, to borrow the language of the Apostle, we were barbarians to one another; yet, having gained some knowledge of the Icelandic beforehand, and being acquainted with its kindred dialects, the Swedish and Danish, I could easily collect the scope and substance of his discourse, and, from its general tenor, do not hesitate to pronounce it strictly evangelical. Towards the close, he gave a summary view of the means by which the gospel has been propagated, from the time it began to be spoken by the Lord Jesus and his Apostles, down to the present day; and, by a noble prosopopœia, reminded Iceland of the rich share she had enjoyed of this blessing, and the responsibility she lay under for the use of her mercies. In particular, he called the attention of the inhabitants of *Reykiavik* to the privileges which had been bestowed upon them in this respect; but added, that it was a lamentable but notorious fact, that their degeneracy

seemed to keep pace with the excellence of the ministers that were sent to labour among them. He then proceeded to place the minister, which he did by simply stating his presentation by the King of Denmark, and exhorting both him and the congregation to the discharge of the duties they mutually owed each other. After sermon, the Rev. Arne Helgason, who had been presented to the living, went to the altar, and three females stepped forward and knelt, in order to receive the sacrament. The celebration of this rite commenced by the clergyman's chanting the Lord's prayer, and the words of the institution: after which, the choristers sung a sacramental hymn, and the communicants were served at the same time with the elements. Several short prayers were then repeated, to which responses were given by the choristers; and the service concluded with the singing of a psalm, and the enunciation of the levitical benediction.

The worship was well attended, and would have had a most solemn effect, had it not been for the crying of young children, who were allowed to remain, to the great annoyance of the congregation.

CHAP. II.

Leave Reykiavik for the North—Mode of Travelling—Mossfell Church—Skálabrecka—Mode of Salutation in Iceland—Hospitality—Description of Icelandic Tents—Dreadful Fissure of Almannagiâ—Thingvalla Church—Seat of the Ancient Court of Justice—Tract of Lava—Fissure of Hrafnagiâ—Hot springs of Laugarvalla—The Geysers—Haukadal—Ari the Learned—Remarkable instance of Intelligence in a Girl—White River—White River Lake—Desert—Ice Mountains—Valley of Eyafiord—Group of Icelanders reading the New Testament—Factory of Akureyri—Want of Bibles, and anxiety to obtain them—Visit to the Sheriff at Kiarne—Female Library—Domestic Worship.

At an early hour on the morning of the 26th of July, I began to pack up my baggage, and make the final preparations for my departure to the north. The horses being caught, my servant proceeded to load them, which was accomplished in the following manner. Large square pieces of a thin fibrous turf were laid on the horses backs, above which was placed a kind of wooden saddle, called, in Icelandic, *klifberi*, that served the double purpose of keeping the turf together, and supporting the baggage, which was suspended on two wooden pegs, fixed one on each side of the saddle. The whole was fastened by means of two leathern thongs that went round the belly of the horse. Having partaken of an excellent breakfast at the Sysselmand's, we sent the baggage on before us; and, bidding adieu to our friends in *Reykiavik*, we set off about twelve o'clock, accompanied by Mr Edmund Hodgson, a gentleman from England, and Mr Vidalin, one of the Bishop's sons, who intended to proceed with us as far as the Geysers. Mr Knudsen also con-

ducted us to the *Laxâ*, or Salmon River, * which falls into the bay about four miles to the east of *Reykiavik*, and abounds in the excellent species of fish from which it derives its name. A little farther on, we fell in with our baggage, and could not help smiling at the striking resemblance our whole company bore to a band of tinkers. However, I was soon reconciled to the mode of travelling, on discovering that it was quite oriental, and almost fancied myself in the midst of an Arabian caravan. In fact, there exist so many coincidencies between the natural appearances of this island, together with the manners and customs of its inhabitants, and what is to be met with in the East, that I must claim some indulgence from the reader, if I should occasionally allude to them, especially as they tend to throw light on many passages of Scripture. Our horses formed a pretty large cavalcade, amounting to not less than eighteen in number. The first was led by one of the servants; and the rest were tied to each other in a line, by means of a cord of hair fastened to the tail of the one that went before, and tied round the under jaw of the one that followed. Owing to this mode of leading them, it is of importance to have horses that are accustomed to it, otherwise they are sure to drag behind, and when any of those that go before happen to leap over a torrent, or begin to trot, the unbroken ones are taken by surprise, heave up their heads, and generally break the rein. In this case, if your servant be careless, and no person brings up the rear, you may proceed for a mile or two without discovering that the half of your cavalcade is amissing. The Arabs have an effectual method of guarding against this inconvenience, by fixing a small bell round the neck of the last camel in the row. Sometimes the horses are suffered to go loose, in which case they are driven before the travellers; and, should any of them stray from the path, a certain call from the guide is sufficient to bring them back.

The first part of the road was by no means calculated to

* This river is otherwise called the *Hellard*, or Cavernous River, from the numerous holes in the lava that forms its bed.

inspire us with very favourable ideas of the country; for little else appeared around us but vast fields of stones and comminuted lava. On the left hand, at no great distance, we had the continuation of the *Esian* mountains, the western extremities of which face *Reykiavik;* and a little before us, on the same side, lay the *Skálafiall*, whose three pyramidic tops were towering high above the clouds. About six in the evening we arrived at *Mossfell*, which stands on an eminence, and commands an extensive, though rather barren prospect. The church is built of wood, has a coat of turf around the sides, and the roof consists of the same material. It has only two small windows at the east end, and a skylight to the south; and the whole structure does not exceed thirteen feet in length, by nine in breadth. We did not find the clergyman at home; but his wife treated us with plenty of fresh cream, and we were quite delighted with the frankness and agility with which she performed the rites of hospitality.

Leaving *Mossfell*, we entered a moor, which, from west to east, the direction in which we travelled, was certainly not less than eighteen miles. The ride was dreary in the extreme. For more than five hours we did not see a single house, or indeed any living creature, excepting a few golden plovers, which, from their melancholy warble, only added to the gloominess of the scenery. At midnight we reached the western margin of the Thingvalla Lake, and stopped at a small cottage called *Skálabrecka*. All, of course, was shut; but we followed Captain Von Scheel, who scaled the walls, and each of us endeavoured to find some window or hole in the roof, through which we might rouse some of the inhabitants. It was not, however, till the Captain had forced open one of the doors, and called as loud as he was able, that we effected our purpose. The salutation he made use of was, *Her se Gud*, "May God be in this place!" which, after he had repeated it near a dozen of times, was answered with *Drottinn blessa thik*, "The Lord bless thee." My imagination led me instantly to the field of Boaz, Ruth ii. 4; and I felt all the force of our Saviour's injunction: "When

ye enter the house, salute it; and if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it," Matth. x. 12, 13. The common salutations of the Icelanders are most palpably oriental. On meeting a person, you hail him with *Sæl vertu*, which exactly corresponds to the Hebrew *Shalom lach;* or the Arabic *Salam alcik:* neither of which signify "peace," in the occidental sense of the word, but "I wish thee happiness, or prosperity." It would appear, from the Edda, that the ancient Scandinavians used *Heill* instead of *Sæll*, whence, through the medium of the Anglo-Saxon, our English "hail," which occurs as a salutation in many parts of the Bible. * The person you salute generally replies, *Drottinn blessa ydr*, or *Blessa ydr Drottinn*, "The Lord bless you." When you meet the head of a family, you wish prosperity to him, and all that are in his house, (see 1 Sam. xxv. 6.); and, on leaving them, you say, *Se i Guds Fridi*, "May you remain in the peace of God;" which is returned with, *Guds Fridi veri med ydr*, "The peace of God be with you." Both at meeting and parting, an affectionate kiss on the mouth, without distinction of rank, age, or sex, is the only mode of salutation known in Iceland, except sometimes in the immediate vicinity of the factories, where the common Icelander salutes a foreigner whom he regards as his superior, by placing his right hand on his mouth or left breast, and then making a deep bow. When you visit a family in Iceland, you must salute them according to their age and rank, beginning with the highest, and descending, according to your best judgment, to the lowest, not even excepting the servants: but, on taking leave, this order is completely reversed; the salutation is first tendered to the servants, then to the children, and, last of all, to the mistress and master of the family.

* Both expressions are still used in Swedish poetry, as in the beautiful hymn of Hammarsköld, on the Shepherds at Bethlehem:

"*Hell*, *säll* dig Messias, Du syndares tröst!
Sällt er det at bära Din bild i sit bröst
Ditt heliga namn på sin tunga." †

† *Poetiska Studier*. Stockholm, 1813.

The remoteness of the sleeping apartment, which lay at the inner end of a long narrow passage, could not but render it difficult for the people to hear us; however, they soon began to make their appearance; and, instead of looking sulky, or grumbling at us for having disturbed them in their soundest repose, they manifested the utmost willingness to serve us; and assisted us in unloading the horses, and loosing our tents, which we pitched close to the lake. The Icelandic tents pretty much resemble those of the Bedoween Arabs, and are erected in the following manner: Two poles, of from five to six feet in length, are stuck fast in the ground, at the distance of seven or eight feet, and joined together at the top by a third pole, over which the curtain, consisting of white wadmel, or coarse woollen cloth, is spread, and braced tight by means of cords fastened to the eaves, and tied at the other end to hooked wooden pins, which are driven into the ground at different distances round the tent. The flaps are provided with small holes around the border, and are fastened close to the ground in the same manner, except at the one end, where a small piece is left loose to serve the purpose of a door. In these tents the natives live several weeks on the mountains every summer, while they are collecting the *lichen Islandicus*, and are extremely fond of this kind of Nomadic life.

Our friend, Captain von Scheel, lay on an excellent bed, supported by two long wooden poles, fixed at each end to the top of his travelling chests, about a foot and a half above the ground; and this commodious method I also adopted on my arrival in the north: but at present I was obliged to spread my couch on the ground, from which I was separated only by the flat pieces of turf that had served as packsaddles; and my ridding-saddle, placed on its back, formed an admirable pillow. To prevent the horses from running away, their fore-feet were tied together with a rope of hair, in the one end of which was an eye, and the other was wound round the ancle-bone of a sheep, and thus fixed in the noose. As the morning was rather cold, we got a supply of warm milk, which proved very refreshing; and a little before two

o'clock, I sat down on one of the wooden boxes, at the door of my tent, and read the 103d Psalm, in my small pocket-Bible—so clear are the summer nights in this northern latitude. Lifting up my heart to my Heavenly Father, I humbly presented my tribute of praise for the mercies of the past day, and retired to rest in the possession of a high degree of comfort and peace.

Having reposed about six hours, I drew aside the curtain of my tent door, when the *Thingvalla-vatn* presented itself full before me, near the middle of which the two black volcanic islands of *Sandey* and *Nesey* rose into view. On the opposite side, a rugged range of mountains, above which the sun had just risen, stretched along to the right; and the prospect was bounded on the south by a number of mountains, diversified in size and form, but all of which appeared to owe their birth to the convulsive throes of the earth, occasioned at some remote period by the violence of subterraneous fire. The inhabitants of the cottage seemed very poor; and though they were in possession of a few books, had no part of the Scriptures. I therefore presented the peasant with a Bible, which he received with every demonstration of gratitude and joy.

After bathing in the lake, the bottom of which consisted of the finest particles of lava, and partaking of a dish of warm coffee, which I contrived to boil on the ground, we set off for *Thingvalla*, across a plain entirely covered with lava; but, as it was smoother and less broken, we rode over it without much difficulty. The track we followed led us all at once to the brink of the frightful chasm, called *Almannagiâ*, * where the solid masses of burnt rock have been disrupted, so as to form a fissure, or gap, not less than an hundred and eighty feet deep; in many places nearly of the same width; and about three miles in length. At first sight,

* The etymology of this epithet I have not been able to learn with any certainty. Either it denotes the chasm capable of containing *the wonderful population* of Iceland, or that through which *all* must pass who travel this way; or, what is more likely than either, the fissure in which the generality of the people pitched their tents when they attended the *Althing*, or General Assembly, held in the neighbourhood.

the stupendous precipices inspired us with a certain degree of terror, which, however, soon left us, and we spent nearly half an hour in surveying the deep chasms, running nearly parallel with the main one, almost below our feet. On the west side of the rent, at no great distance from its southern termination, it is met by another opening, partially filled with large masses of broken rock, down which the traveller must resolve to proceed. Binding up the bridles of our horses, we made them descend before us, while we contemplated with surprise the undaunted nimbleness with which they leaped from one step of this natural staircase to another. In our own descent, it was not without impressions of fear that we viewed the immensely huge pieces of rock that projected from the sides of the chasm, almost overhead, and which appeared to be but slenderly attached to the precipice. When we arrived at the bottom, we found ourselves situated in the midst of a fine green; and, after stopping once more to admire the wild and rugged grandeur of the scenery, we again mounted our steeds, and, reaching a pass in the eastern cliffs, which, owing to the sinking of the ground, are considerably lower, we made our egress with the utmost ease.

We now entered the *Thingvalla*, or Court Valley; and, crossing the river *Öxerâ*, by which it is divided, came about one o'clock to *Thingvalla* church, where we were kindly received, and resolved to await our baggage, which had proceeded by a more circuitous route. The pastor is an aged man of sixty-nine. His parish consists of twelve families; and though he could not give me any certain statement, yet he did not believe that there were more than two, or, at most, three of them that were in possession of a copy of the Bible. He promised to inform his parishioners of the supply that had come to the island. The church is very small, not much larger than that of *Mossfell*, and is filled with barrels, books, and chests, which serve the purpose of seats; and, on a shelf before the altar, is a coffin, which the clergyman has prepared for himself; and which, in all likelihood, he must soon occupy.

Sketched by Capt.n Hesak

Engraved by R. Scott Edin.r

HAY-MAKING AND VIEW OF THE ALMANNAGIÂ FROM THINGVALLA.

What renders *Thingvalla* the most remarkable, perhaps, of any spot to which importance is attached in the annals of Iceland, is its having been the seat of the *Althing*, or general assembly of the nation, for the period of nearly nine hundred years. In 928, when the Ulfliotian Code was received by the inhabitants, the supreme court of justice, which had been held for several years at a place called Hof, in the Kiosar district, was removed to this plain; and the public concerns of the people continued to be discussed, and public justice administered here, till the year 1800, when the dreadful convulsions which the vicinity had suffered from earthquakes, were made a pretext for the removal of the court to *Reykiavik*, where it is now held. Nor was it merely the seat of civil judicature. The consistory or ecclesiastical court, under the presidency of the Bishop of Skalholt, was also convened annually at this place; and numbers repaired to *Thingvalla*, who had no interest pending at either court, merely for the sake of meeting their friends. It accordingly holds a conspicuous place in all the Sagas or ancient traditionary accounts, and is peculiarly worthy of notice, on account of its being the spot where the Christian religion was publicly acknowledged in the year 1000: A decision which was hastened by the following circumstance.—While the heathen and those who professed Christianity were engaged in all the ardour of dispute, a messenger came running into the assembly with the intelligence, that subterraneous fire had broken out in the district of Ölfus, and that it threatened the mansion of the high priest Thoroddr. On hearing this, the heathen exclaimed: "Can it be matter of surprise that the gods should be angry at such speeches?" To which Snorri Godi, an advocate of the Christians, replied by as pointed a question: "At what were the gods angry then, at the period when the very lava on which we now stand was burning?" The force of the argument was felt: the assembly adjourned for that day; and when they again met, an act was passed for the abolition of all public acts of idolatry, and the introduction of Christianity as the authorised religion.

Previous to the year 1690, the court was held in the open air, surrounded by a scenery, the wildest and most horrific of any in nature, and awfully calculated to add to the terrors of justice, and maintain the inviolability of the civil code. "It is," says Sir George Mackenzie,* "a spot of singular wildness and desolation; on every side of which, appear the most tremendous effects of ancient convulsion and disorder; while nature now sleeps in a death-like silence amid the horrors she has formed." As the aged clergyman was unable to walk about with us himself, he begged we would allow his son to shew us the wonders of the place. We accordingly followed him a little to the north-west of the church, when we entered on a long and narrow tract of solid lava, covered with the richest vegetation, but completely separated from the rocks on both sides, by two parallel fissures, which, in most places, are upwards of forty fathoms in depth, and in some places no bottom can be found at all. They are filled with the most beautiful pellucid water, till within about sixty feet of the brink on which we stood. It was impossible for us to look down into the dreadful abyss on either side, without being sensible of the most disagreeable emotions; and when, with the terrors of our situation, we combined the idea of the awful period when the rocks rent and the mountains fell, we felt a desire to remove as quickly as possible to a safer and more agreeable scene. The place is called *Lögbergit*, or "the Law Mount;"† and the ruins of the house occupied by the chief magistrate are still to be seen. A little below this, near the side of the river, we were shewn the spot, where, in ancient times, many a miserable wight was burned for witchcraft. On removing a little of the earth, we discovered the remains of burnt bones and

* Travels in Iceland, p. 318. 1st Edit.

† The administration of public justice on certain hills was not only common throughout Scandinavia, but was also practised in Scotland, and different other nations. Hence, the term "Law" is still applied to many hills in Scotland, as Largolaw, Berrilaw, in Fifeshire, &c. We also meet with Dingwall in the north of Scotland, Tingwall in Shetland and the Isle of Man; all of which are manifestly the Icelandic Thingvalla—compound of *Thing*, a forum or court of justice, and *valla*, which signifies a field or plain.

ashes. Such females as were convicted of child murder, were drowned in a pool formed by the river *Öxerâ*, in the *Almannagiâ*, just before it reaches the cataract by which it descends into the plain. The other culprits were beheaded on *Thorsleifsholm*, a small island in the middle of the river.

After dining on an excellent dish of fresh salmon trout, a species of fish in which the lake abounds, and equally good curds and cream, we left *Thingvalla*, and pursued our journey round the north end of the lake. The whole of the tract consisted of lava, and, at almost every turn of the narrow path, we fell in with chasms and apertures, which wore the most perilous aspect. The dreariness, however, of the scene, was in some measure enlivened by the small bushes of birch and willow, that every now and then reared their heads among the rough cakes of lava. In the ascent on the opposite side of the lake, is another large fissure, called *Hrafnagiâ*, or "the fissure of the ravens," which forms an almost exact counterpart to the *Almannagiâ*, with which it runs parallel to the distance of more than two miles. It is supposed, that the whole of the intervening space was originally of the same altitude with the heights on both sides; but in one of the terrible convulsions, to which this part of the island has been subjected, the ground has sunk to its present level; and, disrupting at the same time from the adjoining rocks, these and other rents in the neighbourhood have been formed. We had here to pass a natural bridge, consisting of a thin crust of lava, little more than two feet in breadth; yet, as the Icelandic horses are uncommonly sure-footed, and generally accustomed to traverse such rugged tracts, we preferred riding to walking, and, in the good providence of God, arrived in safety on the opposite side. We now entertained the hope of entering a more auspicious region; but after crossing a dismal stream of lava, the surface of which was covered with grey moss, and in many places exhibited large caves, we were suddenly arrested by sharp vitrified masses of broken lava, which appears to have proceeded from a volcano close to us on the left, and on its reaching this spot to have cooled and contracted, and thus

the numerous crevices have been formed which presented themselves everywhere around us. Proceeding, with wary step, we ultimately succeeded in getting across this rough and difficult tract; and descending by the south side of a large mountain, whose surface discovered but scanty traces of vegetation, we entered a fine valley, the grass of which, though coarse, was nearly two feet in length. The numerous peaked mountains to the left, and the yellowish volcanic cones at their base, exhibited one of the most romantic prospects we had yet beheld. We next crossed a barren moor, and, after winding round the foot of some lofty mountains, reached the farm of *Laugarvalla*, situated close to the lake of the same name, about half past eight in the evening.

Having pitched our tents on a beautiful green at some distance from the houses, and feasted luxuriously on some rich cream which we obtained from the farmer, we went, before retiring to sleep, to visit the hot springs on the margin of the lake. From most of them, the water is thrown up at irregular intervals, yet not to any great height; three feet being the highest we observed. They erupt, however, with great impetuosity, and a considerable quantity of steam makes its escape. In the hottest we tried, Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at 212°. They appear to be of a strong sulphureous quality, and the incrustations formed by their depositions are extremely delicate and beautiful.

The prospect we had on the morning of the 28th, far transcended what we had enjoyed the preceding day in the vicinity of *Thingvalla*. We had the *Laugarvalla Lake* direct before us, and, a little to the south, another larger lake connected with it, and known by the name of *Apa-vatn*. The large volumes of steam which rose from the spouting springs close to the farm; those which made their escape from the numerous caldrons at the south side of the lake; and especially the column, eclipsing all the rest, which was emitted from the *Reykia-hver*, at the distance of seven miles to the north-east, had the grandest effect; and, viewed in conjunction with the widely extended plain, intersected in various parts by beautiful serpentine rivers, the long range

of mountains to the eastward, over which *Mount Hekla* reared her three snow-clad summits; those in the neighbourhood of *Skalholt*, and the lofty *Eyafialla* Yökul,* presented altogether a landscape which only wanted wood to render it the most completely picturesque of any in the world. The clearness, too, and serenity of the atmosphere, made every object appear to double advantage. Every finer feeling of the mind was called into exercise, and I do not recollect that I ever repeated with more exquisite delight the following lines of the Christian poet:

> "Parent of good! thy works of might
> I trace with wonder and delight,
> In them thy glories shine;
> There's nought in earth, or sea, or air,
> Or heaven itself, that's good or fair,
> But what is wholly thine."

We had enjoyed uninterrupted good weather since leaving *Reykiavik*, but now there was not a cloud to be seen in the whole horizon; the sun shone with dazzling splendour, and the heat was so intense, that it was with some degree of reluctance we left the shade of our tents in order to prosecute our journey. What proved most annoying, was an immense quantity of large musquitoes, by which our horses were sadly tormented; and, though we tied handkerchiefs over our faces, it was scarcely possible to prevent them from biting us. From *Laugarvalla*, our way lay along the base of several sloping mountains to the north-west of *Skalholt*, till we came to the *Bruará*, a broad and rapid river, which, after receiving the joint waters of the *Laugarvalla* and *Apa* lakes, has its confluence with the majestic *Hvitá*, or white river, a little below *Skalholt*. As there was no ferry in the neighbourhood, we were under the necessity of fording it, in the idea of which, there is something very revolting to a stranger, especially when he stands on the bank, and sur-

* *Yökul* signifies an ice mountain, and is derived from *Iaki*, a lump or fragment of ice.

veys the breadth and rapidity of the stream. Getting the baggage tied as high on the horses as possible, and having been apprised of the necessity of keeping their heads against the current, to prevent its getting too powerful for them, we descended into the river, and our horses, after a severe struggle, succeeded in bringing us safely across.

We had now a pleasant ride over the marshes to the hot springs, called the *Geysers*, at which we arrived about a quarter past four in the afternoon. At the distance of several miles, on turning round the foot of a high mountain on our left, we could descry, from the clouds of vapour that were rising and convolving in the atmosphere, the spot where one of the most magnificent and unparalleled scenes in nature is displayed:—where, bursting the parted ground, Great Geyser

> "—— hot, through scorching cliffs, is seen to rise,
> With exhalations steaming to the skies!" *

Electrified, as it were, by the sight, and feeling impatient to have our curiosity fully gratified, Mr Hodgson and I rode on before the cavalcade; and, just as we got clear of the south-east corner of the low hill, at the side of which the springs are situated, we were saluted by an eruption which lasted several minutes, and during which the water appeared to be carried to a great height in the air. Riding on between the springs and the hill, we fell in with a small green spot, where we left our horses, and proceeded, as if by an irresistible impulse, to the gently sloping ground, from the surface of which numerous columns of steam were making their escape.

Though surrounded by a great multiplicity of boiling springs, and steaming apertures, the magnitude and grandeur of which far exceeded any thing we had ever seen before, we felt at no loss in determining on which of them to

* Ἡ μὲν γάρ θ' ὕδατι λιαρῷ ῥέει, ἀμφὶ δὲ καπνὸς
Γίνεται ἐξ ἀυτῆς ὡσεὶ σεύοις ἀιθομένοιο. ILIAD 22. line 149.

feast our wondering eyes, and bestow the primary moments of astonished contemplation. Near the northern extremity of the tract rose a large circular mound, formed by the depositions of the fountain, justly distinguished by the appellation of the *Great Geyser*, * from the middle of which a great degree of evaporation was visible. Ascending the rampart, we had the spacious bason at our feet more than half filled with the most beautiful hot crystalline water, which was but just moved by a gentle ebullition, occasioned by the escape of steam from a cylindrical pipe or funnel in the centre. This pipe I ascertained by admeasurement to be seventy-eight feet of perpendicular depth; its diameter is in general from eight to ten feet, but near the mouth it gradually widens, and opens almost imperceptibly into the bason, the inside of which exhibits a whitish surface, consisting of a siliceous incrustation, which has been rendered almost perfectly smooth by the incessant action of the boiling water. The diameter of the bason is fifty-six feet in one direction, and forty-six in another; and, when full, it measures

* The very appropriate term *Geyser* is derived from the Icelandic *geys a*, "to rage, burst forth with vehemence and impetuosity." Among many other classical works, it occurs in the *Edda*, towards the close of the ancient and sublime poem, entitled the *Völuspá*, where the following description is given of the final conflagration:

"Sol tekur sortna,	*The sun turns pale;*
Sigur fold i mar;	*The spacious earth*
Hverfa af himni	*The sea ingulphs;*
Heithar stiörnar:	*From heaven fall*
Geysar eimi	*The kindled stars:*
Vith aldur nara;	*At the end of time*
Leikur hár hiti	*The vapours rage,*
Vith himin sialfan	*And playful flames*
	Involve the skies."

It is also used by the poet Eystein, when depicting the same tremendous scene in the 70th verse of his *Lilja*:

"Sva *geysar* thá eldr oc æsir	*Then* raging *fire shall spout on high*
Iörd oc fiöll i heimi öllum,	*From every field and mountain top,*
Ad ecki finnst thá upp ad skyium	*And all shall burn, from the utmost sky*
Ofvan til, oc nidr ad grunni.	*Down to the earth's remotest prop.*"

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about four feet in depth from the surface of the water to the commencement of the pipe. The borders of the bason, which form the highest part of the mound, are very irregular, owing to the various accretions of the deposited substances; and at two places are small channels, equally polished with the interior of the bason, through which the water makes its escape, when it has been filled to the margin. The declivity of the mound is rapid at first, especially on the north-west side, but instantly begins to slope more gradually, and the depositions are spread all around to different distances, the least of which is near an hundred feet. The whole of this surface, the two small channels excepted, displays a beautiful siliceous efflorescence, rising in small granular clusters, which bear the most striking resemblance to the heads of cauliflowers, and, while wet, are of so extremely delicate a contexture, that it is hardly possible to remove them in a perfect state. They are of a brownish colour, but in some places approaching to a yellow. On leaving the mound, the hot water passes through a turfy kind of soil, and, by acting on the peat, mosses, and grass, converts them entirely into stone, and furnishes the curious traveller with some of the finest specimens of petrifaction.

Having stood some time in silent admiration of the magnificent spectacle which this matchless fountain, even in a state of inactivity, presents to the view, as there were no indications of an immediate eruption, we returned to the spot where we had left our horses; and, as it formed a small eminence at the base of the hill, and commanded a view of the whole tract, we fixed on it as the site of our tents. About thirty-eight minutes past five, we were apprized, by low reports, and a slight concussion of the ground, that an eruption was about to take place; but only a few small jets were thrown up, and the water in the bason did not rise above the surface of the outlets. Not being willing to miss the very first symptoms of the phenomenon, we kept walking about in the vicinity of the spring, now surveying some of the other cavities, and now collecting elegant specimens of petrified wood, leaves, &c. on the rising ground between the

Geyser and the base of the hill. At fifteen minutes past eight we counted five or six reports, that shook the mound on which we stood, but no remarkable jet followed: the water only boiled with great violence, and, by its heavings, caused a number of small waves to flow towards the margin of the bason, which, at the same time, received an addition to its contents. Twenty-five minutes past nine, as I returned from the neighbouring hill, I heard reports which were both louder and more numerous than any of the preceding, and exactly resembled the distant discharge of a park of artillery. Concluding from these circumstances that the long expected wonders were about to commence, I ran to the mound, which shook violently under my feet, and I had scarcely time to look into the bason, when the fountain exploded, and instantly compelled me to retire to a respectful distance on the windward side. The water rushed up out of the pipe with amazing velocity, and was projected by irregular jets into the atmosphere, surrounded by immense volumes of steam, which, in a great measure, hid the column from the view. The first four or five jets were inconsiderable, not exceeding fifteen or twenty feet in height; these were followed by one about fifty feet, which was succeeded by two or three considerably lower; after which came the last, exceeding all the rest in splendour, which rose at least to the height of seventy feet. The large stones which we had previously thrown into the pipe were ejaculated to a great height, especially one, which was thrown much higher than the water. On the propulsion of the jets, they lifted up the water in the bason nearest the orifice of the pipe to the height of a foot, or a foot and a half, and, on the falling of the column, it not only caused the bason to overflow at the usual channels, but forced the water over the highest part of the brim, behind which I was standing. The great body of the column (at least ten feet in diameter,) rose perpendicularly, but was divided into a number of the most superb curvated ramifications; and several smaller sproutings were severed from it, and projected in oblique directions, to the no small danger

of the spectator, who is apt to get scalded, ere he is aware, by the falling jet.

On the cessation of the eruption, the water instantly sunk into the pipe, but rose again immediately, to about half a foot above the orifice, where it remained stationary. All being again in a state of tranquillity, and the clouds of steam having left the bason, I entered it, and proceeded within reach of the water, which I found to be 183° of Fahrenheit, a temperature of more than twenty degrees less than at any period while the bason was filling, and occasioned, I suppose, by the cooling of the water during its projection into the air.

The whole scene was indescribably astonishing; but what interested us most, was the circumstance, that the strongest jet came last, as if the *Geyser* had summoned all her powers in order to shew us the greatness of her energy, and make a grand finish before retiring into the subterraneous chambers in which she is concealed from mortal view. Our curiosity had been gratified, but it was far from being satisfied. We now wished to have it in our power to inspect the mechanism of this mighty engine, and obtain a view of the springs by which it is put in motion: but the wish was vain; for they lie in "a tract which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen;"—which man, with all his boasted powers, cannot, and dare not approach. While the jets were rushing up towards heaven, with the velocity of an arrow, my mind was forcibly borne along with them, to the contemplation of the Great and Omnipotent JEHOVAH, in comparison with whom, these, and all the wonders scattered over the whole immensity of existence, dwindle into absolute insignificance; whose almighty command spake the universe into being; and at whose sovereign fiat the whole fabric might be reduced, in an instant, to its original nothing. Such scenes exhibit only "the hiding of His power." It is merely the surface of His works that is visible. Their internal structure He hath involved in obscurity; and the sagest of the sons of man is incapable of tracing them from their origin to their consummation. After the closest and

most unwearied application, the utmost we can boast of is, that we have heard a whisper of His proceedings, and investigated the extremities of His operations *

On the morning of the 29th I was awakened by Captain Von Scheel, at twenty-three minutes past five o'clock, to contemplate an eruption of the spring, which Sir John Stanley † denominates the *New Geyser*, situated at the distance of an hundred and forty yards to the south of the principal fountain. It is scarcely possible, however, to give any idea of the brilliancy and grandeur of the scene which caught my eye on drawing aside the curtain of my tent. From an orifice, nine feet in diameter, which lay directly before me, at the distance of about an hundred yards, a column of water, accompanied with prodigious volumes of steam, was erupted with inconceivable force, and a tremendously roaring noise, to varied heights, of from fifty to eighty feet, and threatened to darken the horizon, though brightly illumined by the morning sun. During the first quarter of an hour, I found it impossible to move from my knees, on which I had raised myself, but poured out my soul in solemn adoration of the Almighty Author of nature, to whose controul all her secret movements and terrifying operations are subject:—"who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; who toucheth the hills, and they smoke." ‡ At length I repaired to the fountain, where we all met, and communicated to each other our mutual and enraptured feelings of wonder and admiration. The jets of water now subsided; but their place was occupied by the spray and steam, which, having free room to play, rushed with a deafening roar, to a height little inferior to that of the water. On throwing the largest stones we could find into the pipe, they were instantly propelled to an amazing height; and some of them that were cast up more perpendicularly than the others, remained for the space of four or five minutes within the influence of the steam, being successively ejected, and falling again in a very

* Eccles. iii. 10. and Job xxvi. 14. in the Heb.

† Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland, p. 23.

‡ Psalm civ. 32.

amusing manner. A gentle northern breeze carried part of the spray at the top of the pillar to the one side, when it fell like a drizzling rain, and was so cold that we could stand below it, and receive it on our hands or face without the least inconvenience. While I kept my station on the same side with the sun, a most brilliant circular bow, of a large size, appeared on the opposite side of the fountain; and, on changing sides, having the fountain between me and the sun, I discovered another, if possible still more beautiful, but so small as only to encircle my head. Their hues entirely resembled those of the common rainbow. After continuing to roar about half an hour longer, the column of spray visibly diminished, and sunk gradually, till twenty-six minutes past six, when it fell to the same state in which we had observed it the preceding day, the water boiling at the depth of about twenty feet below the orifice of the shaft.

The external structure of this fountain is very different from that of the *Great Geyser*. The crater, or pipe, which is about nine feet in diameter, and forty-four in depth, is not entirely circular; neither does it descend so perpendicularly as that of the other. At the orifice it becomes still more irregular, and, instead of opening into a bason, it is defended on the one side by an incrustated wall, about a foot and a half in height, while on the other it is level with the surface of the ground.

The name given to this fountain by the natives is *Strockr*, which is derived from the verb *strocka*, "to agitate, or bring into motion," and properly denotes *a churn*. Previous to the year 1789, this name was attached to what Sir John Stanley calls the Roaring Geyser, situate at the distance of eighty yards from the Great Geyser;* the remains of which are still to be seen, as Sir George Mackenzie rightly conjectures,† in the irregular, but most beautiful cavity on the rise of the hill. This information I had from the peasant of *Haukadal*, who appeared to be a judicious and well-in-

* Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland, p. 32.

† Travels in Iceland, p. 215.

formed man. He further told me, that in point of the height of its jets, the *Old Strockr* rivalled the Geyser; but immediately after an earthquake in the above mentioned year, it greatly diminished, and in the course of a few years became entirely tranquil. The same year, *Strockr*, which had not before attracted any particular attention, began to erupt, and threw up water and steam to an amazing height. This account entirely coincides with Sir John Stanley's observations: "One of the most remarkable of these springs," he says, "threw out a great quantity of water, and, from its continual noise, we named it the Roaring Geyser. The eruptions of this fountain were incessant. The water darted out with fury every four or five minutes, and covered a great space of ground with the matter it deposited. The jets were from thirty to forty feet in height. They were shivered into the finest particles of spray, and surrounded by great clouds of steam." * And, treating of Strockr, to which, as was observed above, he gave the name of the New Geyser, he adds in a note, "Before the month of June, 1789, the year I visited Iceland, this spring had not played with any great degree of violence, at least for a considerable time. (Indeed, the formation of the pipe will not allow us to suppose, that its eruptions had, at no former period, been violent.) But, in the month of June, this quarter of Iceland had suffered some very severe shocks of an earthquake; and it is not unlikely, that many of the cavities communicating with the bottom of the pipe had been then enlarged, and new sources of water opened into them." † This conjecture is rendered certain by the fact, that during the dreadful earthquake which happened in the year 1784, not only did the three more remarkable fountains gush forth with uncommon violence, but no less than thirty-five spouting springs made their appearance, many of which, however, afterwards abated in their fury. ‡

During the night there had been two large explosions of

* Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland, p. 32.

† Ibid. p. 41.

‡ Bishop Finnson, in The Transactions of the Icelandic Society,

the *Great Geyser*, but the servant who observed them not awakening us, we were deprived of the sight. However, the loss was made up by the comfortable sleep we enjoyed, of which we had much need, having been fatigued by the ride, and the walks we took after our arrival the preceding day.

At ten minutes before ten, we were attracted to the mound by several loud reports, which were succeeded by a partial eruption; none of the jets exceeding five feet in height. About half past ten the reports were reiterated, but no jets ensued; only a gentle rise was observable in the contents of the bason. At eleven we were again gratified with a most brilliant eruption. The jets were ten or twelve in number, and the water was carried to the height of at least sixty feet. Vast clouds of steam, which made their escape during the eruption, continued to roll and spread as they ascended, till they filled the whole of the horizon around us; and the sun, though shining in full splendour, was completely eclipsed; but the points of the jets, receiving his rays as they rose through the vapour, wore the most charming lustre, being white and glistening as snow. The instant all was over, Mr Hodgson and I repaired to the foot of a small cataract, at the northern base of the mound, over which the streamlet is precipitated in its way down to the river, and had a pleasant bath in the warm water as it fell upon us from the rock above.

A small preliminary eruption again took place at seventeen minutes past one, and another four minutes before two. The bason continued filling, till within three minutes of three, when, after a number of very loud reports, the water burst, and the spouts rose with a noise and velocity which I can compare to nothing more aptly than to those of a quantity of large rockets fired off from the same source. This eruption was the longest of any we saw: a space of eight minutes and ten seconds elapsing from the first propulsion of the water from the bason, till it again subsided into the pipe. The jets were also much higher than in any of the former eruptions, yet none of them exceeded an hundred feet.

THE GEYSERS, AS SEEN JULY 30, 1814.

Our two friends now left us, for the purpose of visiting some other hot springs on their return to *Reykiavik*; but we resolved to spend another night at this place, chiefly for the sake of our horses, that they might be sufficiently rested before we entered the mountains. In the course of the afternoon and evening, there were several indications of a fresh eruption, but they only proved strong ebullitions, which always take place till the bason gets filled. At thirty-five minutes past nine we had another fine spectacle, which was little inferior to any of the preceding, and lasted for the space of five minutes.

The most enrapturing scene, however, that we beheld, was exhibited on the morning of the 30th. About ten minutes past five, we were roused by the roaring of *Strockr*, which blew up a great quantity of steam; and when my watch stood at the full quarter, a crash took place as if the earth had burst, which was instantaneously succeeded by jets of water and spray, rising in a perpendicular column to the height of sixty feet. As the sun happened to be behind a cloud, we had no expectation of witnessing any thing more sublime than we had already seen; but *Strockr* had not been in action above twenty minutes, when the *Great Geyser*, apparently jealous of her reputation, and indignant at our bestowing so much of our time and applause on her rival, began to thunder tremendously, and emitted such quantities of water and steam, that we could not be satisfied with a distant view, but hastened to the mound with as much curiosity as if it had been the first eruption we had beheld. However, if she was more interesting in point of magnitude, she gave the less satisfaction in point of duration, having again become tranquil in the course of five minutes; whereas, her less gaudy, but more steady companion, continued to play till within four minutes of six o'clock. *

* On my return this way from the north, about the middle of August, 1815, I again pitched my tent for two days beside these celebrated fountains, and found their operations still more magnificent and interesting than they were the preceding year. The Great Geyser continued to erupt every six hours in a most imposing manner. In some of the eruptions, the jets seemed to be thrown

Our attention was so much taken up with these two principal fountains, that we had little time or inclination to watch the minutiæ of the numerous inferior shafts and cavities with which the tract abounds. The *Little Geyser* erupted perhaps twelve times in the twenty-four hours; but none of its jets rose higher than eighteen or twenty feet, and gene-

much higher than any I observed last year, several of them reaching an elevation of not less than *an hundred and fifty feet.*

It would appear, from the observations which have been made at different times, that the height of the jets is very irregular. In Olafsen and Povelsen's time, the water was carried to the height of near *three hundred and sixty feet.* When seen by Von Troïl, in 1772, it rose to *ninety-two feet.* Sir John Stanley states the highest jet observed by his company, in 1789, to have been *ninety-six feet.* Lieutenant Ohlsen, a Danish officer, who visited the Geyser in 1804, found by a quadrant, that the highest jet rose to *two hundred and twelve feet.* In 1809, Mr Hooker mentions its rising to upwards of *an hundred feet*; and Sir George Mackenzie states *ninety feet* to have been the height to which he saw the water thrown in 1810.

What rendered my second visit to the Geysers peculiarly interesting, was my discovery of the key to *Strockr*, by the application of which, I could make that beautiful spring play when I had a mind, and throw its water to nearly double the height observable in its natural eruptions. The morning after my arrival, I was awakened by its explosion about twenty minutes past four o'clock; and hastening to the crater, stood nearly half an hour contemplating its jet, and the steady and uninterrupted emission of the column of spray which followed, and which was projected at least an hundred feet into the air. After this, it gradually sunk into the pipe, as it had done the year before, and I did not expect to see another eruption till the following morning. However, about five o'clock in the afternoon, after a great quantity of the largest stones that could be found about the place had been thrown into the spring, I observed it begin to roar with more violence than usual; and, approaching the brink of the crater, I had scarcely time to look down to the surface of the water, which was greatly agitated, when the eruption commenced, and the boiling water rushed up in a moment, within an inch or two of my face, and continued its course with inconceivable velocity into the atmosphere. Having made a speedy retreat, I now took my station on the windward side, and was astonished to observe the elevation of the jets, some of them rising higher than *two hundred feet*; many of the fragments of stones were thrown much higher, and some of considerable size were raised to an invisible height. For some time, every succeeding jet seemed to surpass the preceding, till, the quantity of water in the subterraneous caverns being spent, they gave place to the column of steam, which continued to rush up with a deafening roar for nearly an hour.

The periodical evacuation of *Strockr* having been deranged by this violent experiment, no symptoms whatever of a fresh eruption appeared the following morning. As I wished, however, to see it play once more before I bid an eter-

ally they were about ten or twelve. The pipe of this spring opens into a beautiful circular bason about twelve feet in diameter, the surface of which exhibits incrustations equally beautiful with those of the Great Geyser At the depth of a few feet, the pipe, which is scarcely three feet wide, becomes very irregular; yet its depth has been ascertained to be thirty-eight feet. There is a large steam-hole at a short distance, to the north-west of the Little Geyser, which roars and becomes quiescent with the operations of that spring. A little further down the tract are numerous apertures, some of which are very large, and, being full of clear boiling water, they discover to the spectator the perilous scaffolding on which he stands. When approaching the brink of many of them, he walks over a dome of petrified morass, hardly a foot in thickness, below which is a vast boiling abyss, and even this thin dome is prevented from gaining a due consistence, by the humidity and heat to which it is exposed. Near the centre of these holes is situated the *Little Stockr*, a wonderfully amusing little fountain, which darts its waters in numerous diagonal columns every quarter of an hour.

Nor is it in this direction alone that orifices and cavities abound. In a small gulley close to the Geyser, is a number of holes, with boiling water; to the south of which, rises a bank of ancient depositions, containing apertures of a much larger size than the rest. One of these is filled with beautifully clear water, and discovers to a great depth various groups of incrustations, which are very tempting to the eye of the beholder. The depth of this reservoir is not less than fifty feet. On the brow of the hill, at the height of nearly two hundred feet above the level of the Great Gey-

biting farewell to these wonders of nature, and, especially, being anxious to ascertain the reality of my supposed discovery, I got my servant to assist me, about eight o'clock, in casting all the loose stones we could find into the spring. We had not counted five minutes, when the wished-for phenomena recommenced, and the jets were carried to a height little inferior to what they had gained the preceding evening. At half past nine, I was obliged to set out on my journey; but often looked back on the thundering column of steam, and reflected with amazement at my having given such an impulse to a body which no power on earth could controul.

ser, are several holes of boiling clay; some of which produce sulphur, and the efflorescence of alum; and at the base of the hill, on the opposite side, are not less than twenty springs, which proves that its foundations are entirely perforated with veins and cavities of hot water.

About eleven o'clock, we were under the necessity of lifting our tents, and removing from a place where we had seen some of the grandest of the works of God; and proceeded on to *Haukadal*, which lies at the distance of three quarters of a mile to the north of the Geysers, and, on account of its being the place where Ari Frode, the first historiographer of the north, received his education, has nearly as strong a claim on the attention of the historian as the neighbouring fountains have on that of the naturalist. Ari was one of the most learned Icelanders of his day, and wrote several books of history, the greater part of which have been lost, and all that we now have of his works are the Schedæ and Landnâmabok, the latter of which was continued by other learned men after his death. He was born in the year 1068, and came to Haukadal in the year 1075, where, in company with Teitr, the son of Bishop Isleif, he long enjoyed the tuition of Hallr hinn Milldi, who is said to have been the most liberal and beneficent man on the island. The present occupant is in good circumstances, and possessed of a very frank and obliging disposition. He conducted us into the house, which is uncommonly orderly and clean, and felt no small degree of pleasure in relating to us the different foreign guests that had visited him. He purchased a copy of the New Testament, as did also a young man in the vicinity of the Geysers.

As we had rode on about half an hour before our baggage horses, we went a little to the west of *Haukadal*, to see the remains of St Martin's bath. On the eastern brink of the small river which intersects the plain, is a large stone, eight feet in length, by about five in diameter, the one end of which projecting into the water, contains a small hole about twice the size of a man's hand, through which boiling water issued about twenty years ago. It is now quite dry,

and in a great measure filled up with minute depositions which have been left on the subsiding of the water. Forty years ago, there was another sharp point attached to the stone, in which was a pipe conveying cold water to the bath, which was situated below the projection, so that those who bathed had it in their power to cool or heat the bath at pleasure, by opening either of the cocks fixed in the pipes. The hot water still issues forth in the middle of the river. In the days of ignorance and superstition, this bath was supposed to possess miraculous powers; and numbers resorted to it from various parts, in order to find relief from the diseases with which they were afflicted.

The general appearance of the intervening ground between the *Geysers* and *Haukadal* plainly indicates, that, in former times, it also has been the seat of hot springs. Indeed, the whole tract consists of a stream of lava that has flowed down into the plain from some of the mountains to the north of *Haukadal*, and which appears, on advancing as far as the *Geysers*, to have stopped, and thrown up the mountain called *Laugafell*, at the base of which these springs are situated. When we consider the remoteness of the period at which this must have happened, it appears truly surprising that subterraneous heat should still exist, in the degree necessary to account for the stupendous operations of the springs, while it has never so far accumulated as to produce a volcanic eruption. *

* That the Geyser existed previous to the time of Saxo Grammaticus, that is to say, upwards of six centuries ago, is rendered extremely probable, by the following passage in the Preface to his History of Denmark. Treating of Norway, he adds: "Ab hujus latere occidentali, insula, quæ glacialis dicitur, magno circumfusa reperitur oceano, obsoletæ admodum habitationis tellus, rerumque veri fidem excedentium, et insolitorum eventuum miraculis prædicanda. Illic fons est, qui fumigantis aquæ vitio, nativam rei cujuslibet originem demolitur. Sane quicquid fumi hujus exhalatione respergitur, in lapideæ naturæ duritiam transmutatur. Quæ res mirabilior an periculosior existat, in dubio positum constat: cum fluidam aquæ teneritudinem tantus obsideat rigor, ut admotum quidlibet fumidoque ejus vapore perfusum, in lapidis proprietatem, forma duntaxat superstite, subitâ conversione transmutat. Ibidemque complures alii latices referuntur, qui modo crescentis lymphæ copiis adaucti, plenisque exundantes [illegible] crebras in sublime guttas jaciunt, modo torpentibus scarebi

Our way now lay over a considerable portion of this lava, which was for the most part covered with heath, but every now and then presented springs from which a large quantity of cold crystalline water issued into the plain. The surface also exhibited in many places, bushes of willow and birch, but scarcely ever of that size to entitle them to the name of underwood. On crossing *Fliotsâ*, a broad but shallow river, we came to a hamlet called *Holum*, where, as it was the last house on this side of the desert, we regaled ourselves with a plentiful draught of cream. The family, which was numerous, looked exceedingly poor; and, as they had only an old defective copy of the second part of the Old Testament, I gave the children a copy of the New, in the hopes that the uncommonness of the gift might excite attention to its con-

vix ab imo conspecti, profundis subductioris terræ latibulis absorbentur. Quo fit, ut exuberantes proxima quæque spumarum candore conspergant, exinaniti nullo visus ingenio capiantur."

It is truly mysterious, that the most profound silence should prevail on the subject of these surprising phenomena throughout the Icelandic annals. Supposing them to have existed on the first occupation of Haukadal, it seems difficult to conceive why no mention is made of them by Ari Frode, and other learned men, who were either connected by family ties, or lived on familiar terms with its inhabitants. On the other hand, it is equally surprising, that not the least notice should be taken of their appearance, allowing them to have broken forth subsequent to that period. The first description given of them by a native Icelander, is that of Bryniolf Svenson, Bishop of Skalholt, inserted in Stephanii Notæ Uberiores to the Preface of Saxo. The Bishop flourished about the middle of the seventeenth century. His words are:

"Saxoni attestor, qui anno superiore tale naturæ miraculum his oculis non sine maxima admiratione conspexi in Haukadal, quod Scalholto duobus milliaribus cum semisse distat, prædium cathedrali templo subjectum. Paulatim namque ebullient aquæ fervor in cratere profundissimo subsiluit; et incremento sensibili intumuit, donec craterem impleret ad labra prorsus. Tum vero magno cum tumuli ingenitus fervor aquam in sublime evomuit, præsentissimo proprius astantium cum periculo, quos, nisi caverent, ignita guttæ in delapsu ad internecionem comburerent. At vero exacto, ut arbitrabar, horæ spatio, pariter et æstus defervere, et aqua subsidere atque detumere. Nos autem cum primum accedere in ea ausi, vanitatem repente craterem animadvertimus, et prorsus jam exsiccatum: nec uspiam aquæ vestigium, præter hoc ipsum exinanitum conceptaculum, comparuit. Eruptionem, autem rusticus alteram, intra viginti quatuor horas expectare se dictitabat. Tanto namque spatio intermittere ut plurimum, et recipere."

tents. Their mother immediately summoned them to give me a kiss, in token of their thankfulness for the boon. I now requested them to read a little, when the youngest girl, who might be about fourteen years of age, performed her task with much propriety, though somewhat intimidated by the presence of strangers. She then handed the Testament to her sister, who was upwards of eighteen, and read with so sonorous a voice, that two hundred people might have heard her with ease. It was pleasing to observe, from her manner, and the emphasis she laid on the proper words, that she not only understood, but seemed to feel the importance of what she read. It was part of the evangelic history of the sufferings of the Redeemer. * After making a remark or two on the importance of the Holy Scriptures, and the necessity of perusing them with diligence, we proceeded on our journey, followed by the blessings of a grateful family.

We pursued our course nearly in an easterly direction, across a desert of deep sand, which proved very fatiguing to our horses, till we arrived at the banks of the *Hvitâ*, or White River, which we found flowing in a serpentine course, now spreading its waters over an extensive sandy bed, and now confined to a narrower channel between walls of columnar rock. We rode along the western bank, till we came to the vicinity of the Blue Mountain (*Blâfell*,) when we struck to the left, and encamped about seven in the evening, at a short distance from the base of the mountain. Our station consisted of a sandy hill, partially overgrown with moss, coarse grass, and a few dwarfy willows, close to a rivulet which falls into the *Hvitâ*, a little farther down. Directly behind us rose the huge extinct volcano of *Blâfell*, the summit of which was enveloped in mist, and its sides, which were entirely destitute of vegetation, presented, in many places, deep ravines filled with snow. At a considerable distance

* On my return this way the following year, I was still more gratified to find, that this girl had made an astonishing use of the New Testament during the winter; for there was not a passage to which I made the most indirect allusion, which she did not quote with the same facility and accuracy as if she had read it from the book.

towards the west, we could descry the fantastic summ
a long range of volcanic hills: while, in an easterly dir
the eye was carried over an extensive plain, bounded
distance by the chain of mountains to the north of
which, at that time, was free from smoke and flames, and only distinguishable by the mantle of snow, from which she derives her name. Our situation appeared gloomy in the extreme; but, after kindling a fire, and partaking of some refreshment, we retired to rest, and soon buried in sleep all the unpleasant reflections occasioned by the prospect of the desert.

Next morning, being the Lord's Day, we assembled in Captain Von Scheel's tent, when one of the servants read the third and fourth chapters of the Gospel by John, in Icelandic; after which we were under the necessity of prosecuting our journey, the horses having eaten all the grass in the vicinity during the night, and we had a ride of more than thirty miles to the next station. During the first three hours, we had rather a tedious ride up the steep ascent covered with broken lava, which extends along the west side of the mountain, till we gained its summit, called *Bláfells-háls*, where there is a passage between that mountain and the immense chain of ice-mountains in the interior. From this elevation we had a most commanding prospect of the whole level tract of country, which, beginning at *Hrafnkadal*, and stretching past *Skálholt*, opens into the extensive plains between mount *Hekla* and the sea. Several miles behind *Thingvalla*, lay the large volcanic mountains called *Skialdbreid* and *Tindafiall*; and between us and this latter mountain, a regular chain of high conical mountains commenced, which stretched to a considerable distance along the base of the neighbouring Yökul. The blackness of their appearance formed a perfect contrast to the whiteness of the perennial snows behind them. What particularly struck us, was the majesty of the vast ice mountain, which extends from a little to the east of *Tindafiall*, in a westerly and northerly direction, to the distance of not less than an hundred miles across the interior of the island. Though forming but one connected

mass of ice and snow, it is divided into four parts in the geographical descriptions. The south-east division, which lay next us, is known by the name of *Blâfells-Yökul:* a little farther north it assumes the name of *Eiriks-Yökul;* and the most northerly is called *Bald-Yökul.* The fourth division is that of *Geitlands-Yökul*, which terminates the mountain to the west, and stretches along the north-east parts of the Syssel of *Borgarfiord.* At the spot on which we now stood, it was in our power to receive strong mental impressions either of heat or cold, according to the direction in which we turned. When we looked to the west and north, we had nothing before us but regions of ever-during ice; whereas, on turning to the south, we were reminded by the clouds of smoke ascending from the *Geysers*, of the magazines of fire that lay concealed in that neighbourhood.

Descending by the west end of Blâfell, which here consists of immense irregular masses of dark brown tuffa, we came again, in the course of a short time, to the *Hvitâ*, near its egress from a large lake, to which it gives the name of *Hvitâvatn.* The whole of the western margin of this lake is lined with magnificent glaciers, which, before meeting the water, assume a hue of the most beautiful green. It abounds with excellent fish, and used to be much frequented in former times by the peasants in the south. At the fording-place, the river may be about an hundred yards across; and we found it in some places so deep, that our horses were on the point of swimming. It is certainly the most formidable river in this quarter of Iceland; and is often unfordable for weeks together, when travellers, coming from the desert, are not unfrequently reduced to great straits, by the consumption of the food they had provided for their journey.

On leaving the *Hvitâ*, we encountered a long tract of volcanic sand, with here and there insulated stones, of an immense size, which must have been erupted from the *Kerlingar-fialla* volcanoes, situated at the distance of fifteen or twenty miles in an easterly direction. Most of these volcanic mountains form beautiful pyramids; and some of them are of a great height, and partially covered with snow. The

cone, in the remote distance, is most perfectly formed, and is quite red in appearance, arising from the scoriæ deposited on its sides. None of these volcanoes have ever been explored; nor have I so much as met with their names in any description of the island that I have seen. From the peasant at *Holum*, who has proceeded several times to the vicinity in search of moss, I learned that a very extensive tract of lava stretches between them and the ancient road, called *Spreingi-sand;* and at one place he observed much smoke, which he supposed arose from springs of boiling water.

At four o'clock we came to the Black River (*Svartá*,) fording which, we fell in with an extensive tract, known by the name of the *Kialhraun*, which has been at least twice subjected to fiery torrents from a volcano in the neighbourhood of Bald-Yökul, if not from the Yökul itself. This lava is upwards of twenty miles in length; and, in some places, five or six in breadth. Here the road divided: that called *Kialvegur*, leading to *Skagafiord*, lay to the left, across the lava; whereas the way to *Eyafiord*, which we pursued, ran along its eastern margin, now on one side of the Black River, and now on the other. After travelling about eight miles farther, over a very stony tract, we came to the station of *Grânaness*, which we found to be the termination of a very ancient stream of lava, mostly covered with moss and willows, and having only a little grass in the cavities, which have been formed by the bursting or falling in of the crust. Inhospitable as it appeared, we were obliged to stop, as we were exposed to a heavy rain, and the next green spot was about fifty miles distant.

On the afternoon of Monday, the first of August, we commenced the worst stage on our whole journey. Our road, which at times was scarcely visible, lay along the west side of the *Hof*, or *Arnarfell Yökul*, a prodigious ice mountain, stretching from the volcanoes above mentioned, in a northerly direction, for upwards of fifty miles, when it turns nearly due east, and extends to nearly thirty miles in that direction. The appellation of *Langi Yökul* is also given to this mountain on the maps, but improperly, as that designation

exclusively belongs to the extensive chain of ice mountains already described, as known by the subdivisions of *Blâfell*, *Geitland*, *Eirik*, and *Bald Yökuls*. On passing it, however, we certainly found it sufficiently long: for we rode at no great distance from it for the space of twenty hours, and were all the time exposed to a cold piercing wind which blew from that quarter. About eleven at night we came to the *Blanda*, or Mixed River, the waters of which were of a bluish colour, and, dividing into upwards of a dozen of branches, they rendered our passage both tedious and troublesome. Near the north-west corner of the Yökul, a great number of curiously shaped hills presented themselves to our view, which we found, on approaching them, to be partly volcanic, and partly immense masses of Yökul, intermixed with drosses and fragments of lava, which have been separated from the mountain during some of its convulsions, and hurled along to their present situation by the inundations it has poured down upon the plains. At ten minutes before three o'clock in the morning, as we had got quite surrounded by these hills, and were almost shivering with cold (the waters being covered with fresh ice), we were gratified with a view of the sun, rising in all his glory directly before us. The gloom in which we had been involved now fled away; and we obtained a very extensive prospect of the surrounding country. It was a prospect, however, by no means pleasing; for to whatever side we turned, nothing was visible but the devastations of ancient fires, or regions of perpetual frost:

> —— Pigris ubi nulla campis
> Arbor æstivâ recreatur aurâ.

We were not only far from the habitations of men, but deserted even by the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air. Here "no voice of cattle is ever heard: both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone." *

* Jerem. ix. 10

Leaving a region "where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things," we entertained the hope of meeting soon with a more enlivening prospect. In this, however, we were disappointed: for, we had advanced only a short way, when we entered a stream of lava, which we found rugged and wild in the extreme, and which it took us near an hour to cross. Deep ravines and chasms presented themselves in every quarter; and in many places were huge blisters, full of cracks, which the raging element has formed in its progress. The idea of a fiery torrent, nearly two miles in breadth, proceeding from an ice mountain, will appear to many the wildest and most incongruous that can possibly be conceived: yet such, in reality, was the fact now exhibited before us. We could evidently see the stream of lava descending from the Yökul, at the distance of about a mile to our right, and pursuing its course in a westerly direction among numerous small conical hills, which it has thrown up as it advanced. This lava is called the *Lamba-hraun*, from the circumstance of a number of lambs having been once found in it.

Our way lay next across several considerable hills of yellowish tuffa, with here and there appearances of lava, assuming a basaltine configuration. About nine in the morning we halted at a small green spot, nearly five miles to the north of *Illvidris-hniukar*, a number of variously shaped volcanic hills, which, at a very remote period, have poured forth burning streams to a great distance on the north side of the Yökul; but, finding the grass insufficient for the following night, we set off again about three o'clock in the afternoon, and travelled upwards of eight miles over barren stony mountains, till we arrived at the *Yökulsâ*, or the River of the Ice Mountains, which flowed with great rapidity in a deep channel, the banks of which were composed of clay and loose earth, and on this account very difficult of descent. The fording of this river is attended with considerable danger, owing to the large stones at the bottom; which the traveller is prevented from seeing by the muddiness of the water. In fording it, my horse stumbled with me three times,

and had nearly precipitated me into the stream: but the Lord preserved me, and caused me to experience the literal fulfilment of that gracious promise: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." * Having ascended the northern bank, we came to a tract of marshy ground, where we pitched our tents, and retired immediately to sleep, being much fatigued with the long ride.

Before reaching this part of the desert, we had been rather alarmed by the appearance of two rivers on the maps, which, from their size as there delineated, wore as formidable an aspect as any on the island. They are described as taking their rise from some common source to the south-east of *Arnarfells-Yökul;* and, after separating, the one pursues its course down *Öxnadal*, and pours its waters into the bay of *Eyafiord*, and the other runs past *Holum* into the *Skagafiord*. But no such rivers appear ever to have existed. The *Yökul River*, we had just forded, is the only river of any consequence to the north of the Yökul; and the *Öxnadal* and *Kolbeinsdal* rivers are by no means of the size laid down on the maps, and take their rise in the mountains, between the coast and *Vatna-hialli*, the name by which the desert tract to the north of the Yökul is designated.

At eight o'clock, on the morning of the 3d, we renewed our journey across the mountains. The road was very rough and unbeaten, and mostly up-hill till about noon, when we gained the summit of the mountain-pass, and began to descend on the other side. The descent was at first exceedingly stony and precipitous, and in many places we could not discover any tract. There were, however, heaps of stones cast up at various distances to point out the way, and in some places a heap of bones, from which we could conclude, that the horses of some former travellers had fallen a sacrifice to the badness of the road, while it at the same time warned us of the danger to which our own were exposed. After travelling over several wreaths of snow, and descend-

* Isaiah xliii. 2.

ing about two miles, we could discern from the rise of the mountains before us, that we approached the valley of *Eyafiord*. Having proceeded about two miles farther, we came to the side of a wide and deep gulley, which the mountain-torrent had made in its way down to the valley. The road now lay along the south side of this gulley, in a zig-zag direction, but was nevertheless so precipitous, and approached at times so near the fissure, that if we had rode on any other but Icelandic horses, we certainly could not have ventured where we did. The change in the prospect was indescribably delightful. The green grass with which the valley was richly clad, the beautiful river by which it was intersected, the cottages which lay scattered on both sides, and the sheep and lambs which were grazing in every direction, and which, from their distance below us, appeared only as small specks; these circumstances, combined with the height of the mountains that boldly faced each other, and then sloped gently down into the valley, proved an agreeable relief to the eye, which for four days had scarcely beheld a tuft of grass, or indeed any thing but stones and snow. Our very horses seemed to be animated with the prospect before them, and mended their pace of their own accord. At half past two, we arrived at the foot of the descent, which altogether could not be less than two thousand five hundred feet.

As our baggage horses did not make their appearance on the heights behind us, we allowed our horses to feast on the luxuriant grass in the valley, while we entered the gulley in order to view the scenery. A little way up it opens most majestically on the view, being divided by the torrent into two semicircles, and the cliffs, which surround the opening at the height of between four and five hundred feet, rising into beautiful domes and turrets of various sizes. It resembled a vast amphitheatre, and inspired the mind with sentiments of wonder and awe.

On returning from the fissure, we were surprised to find that the men and horses had not yet arrived, and began to entertain suspicions lest some evil had befallen them on the mountain; but after some time, we discovered them pro-

ceeding along the opposite side of the valley, having descended by another road, though neither so near, nor so easy of descent as that which we had taken.

We now made the best of our way to the first farm in the valley, which is called *Tiörnaba*, and lay at a little distance before us. It is situated exactly in the middle of the valley, upon a beautiful green mount, and consists of several houses which lie together in a cluster, besides smaller ones for the cattle at a short distance from each other. In general, the Icelandic houses are all constructed in the same manner, and, with little or no variation, exhibit the plan of those raised by the original settlers from Norway. The walls, which may be about four feet in height by six in thickness, are composed of alternate layers of earth and stone, and incline a little inwards, when they are met by a sloping roof of turf, supported by a few beams which are crossed by twigs and boughs of birch. The roof always furnishes good grass, which is cut with the scythe at the usual season. In front, three doors generally present themselves, the tops of which form triangles, and are almost always ornamented with vanes. The middle door opens into a dark passage, about thirty feet in length, by five in breadth, from which entrances branch off on either side, and lead to different apartments, such as, the stranger's room, which is always the best in the house, the kitchen, weaving room, &c. and at the inner end of the passage lies the Badstofa, or sleeping apartment, which also forms the sitting and common working-room of the family. In many houses this room is in the garret, to which the passage communicates by a dark and dangerous staircase. The light is admitted through small windows in the roof, which generally consist of the amnion of sheep, though of late years glass has got more into use. Such of the houses as have windows in the walls, bear the most striking resemblance to the exterior of a bastion. The smoke makes its escape through a hole in the roof; but this, it is to be observed, is only from the kitchen, as the Icelanders never have any fire in their sitting-room, even during the severest cold in winter. Their beds are arranged on each side of

the room, and consist of open bedsteads raised about three feet above the ground. They are filled with sea weed, feathers, or down, according to the circumstances of the peasant; over which is thrown a fold or two of wadmel, and a coverlet of divers colours. Though the beds are extremely narrow, the Icelanders contrive to sleep in them by couples, by lying head to foot. Sometimes the inside of the rooms are pannelled with boards, but generally the walls are bare, and collect much dust, so that it is scarcely possible to keep any thing clean. It is seldom the floor is laid with boards, but consists of damp earth, which necessarily proves very unhealthy.

In the stranger's room is a long table with a parallel bench, next to the wall on the one side, and the place of chairs is commonly supplied on the other by large chests, containing the clothes, valuables, &c. of the inhabitants. From the ceiling are also suspended numerous habiliments, and articles of domestic economy; and in some houses, a bed is put up here with curtains, for the accommodation of travellers. Foreigners always complain of the insupportable stench and filth of the Icelandic houses, and, certainly, not without reason; yet I question much if these evils do not exist nearly in the same degree in the Highlands of Scotland, the country hamlets of Ireland, or the common Bauer huts in Germany.

One of the side doors in front, opens into what is called the *Skemma*, a separate apartment containing dried fish and other winter-stores, riding accoutrements, &c. Otherwise this name seems originally to have denoted a gynæceum, which was solely occupied by the female part of the family. The other door is that of the smithy, which, however, in some parts of the island, stands by itself. To these are appended several smaller out-houses for the reception of the cows, and, at a short distance, are those appropriated for the sheep. The whole, together with the hay stacks in the yard, forms a group not altogether unpleasant to the eye of the traveller on approaching it.

The numerous flocks of sheep which surrounded *Tiörnabær*, convinced us that the peasant was in good circum-

stances. On riding up to the door he came out to us, and after learning who we were, he conducted us, with looks of kindness, into the best room in the house, and immediately provided us with cream to quench our thirst till his wife got something prepared for us to eat. In the meantime, our servants fixed the tents at the back of the house. On learning that I had Bibles with me, the peasant, who is a young man, and newly married, regretted that he had not been able, as yet, to furnish his house with a copy, and expressed a wish to see one of those I had in my trunks. Having taken a Bible and a New Testament to shew his wife, he soon returned, having resolved to take both, and paid the price with the utmost cheerfulness. I had scarcely turned to re-enter my tent, when two servant girls came running with money in their hands, and wished to have each a New Testament. As my stock was small, and I had a considerable extent of country to supply from it, chiefly as samples, I was sorry I was under the necessity of putting them off till next year, but testified my approbation of their wish to possess the word of God; and begged them to read, in the mean time, the copies that had come into the family.

Taking into consideration the remoteness of the surrounding cottages from the nearest market-place to which it was intended to forward Bibles next year, I sent for two of the poorest people in the vicinity, and gave each of them a Testament. One of them had a Danish Bible, which he endeavoured, as well as he could, to collect the sense of, but he understood the language very imperfectly. He thanked *me repeatedly, with tears in his eyes,* and rode home quite *overjoyed at the gift he had received.* The other, a young man about nineteen, had been dispatched by his poor and aged parents, to learn the truth of the message that had been sent them. There was an uncommon degree of humble simplicity in his countenance. On receiving the Testament, it was hardly possible for him to contain his joy. As a number of people had now collected round the door of my tent, I caused him to read the third chapter of the Gospel of John. He had scarcely begun, when they all sat down, or knelt on

the grass, and listened with the most devout attention. As he proceeded, the tears began to trickle down their cheeks, and they were all seemingly much affected. The scene was doubtless as new to them as it was to me; and, on my remarking, after he had done, what important instructions were contained in the portion of Scripture he had read, they gave their assent, adding, with a sigh, that they were but too little attended to. The landlady especially seemed deeply impressed with the truths she had heard, and remained sometime after the others were gone, together with an aged female, who every now and then broke out into exclamations of praise to God, for having sent "his clear and pure word" among them. It is impossible for me to describe the pleasure I felt on this occasion. I forgot all the fatigues of travelling over the mountains; and, indeed, to enjoy another such evening, I could travel twice the distance. I bless God for having counted me worthy to be employed in this ministry; to dispense his holy word among a people prepared by him for its reception, and to whom, by the blessing of his Spirit, it shall prove of everlasting benefit: nor can I be sufficiently thankful to the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, for having constituted me the almoner of their bounty, and sending me on an errand, which, while it brings felicity to others, proved a source of so much enjoyment to my own mind.

Early next morning we pursued our route down the valley. The ride was the most agreeable imaginable. The valley is well inhabited, being covered with luxuriant verdure, and affording an excellent pasturage to the sheep and cattle, which form the principal riches of the Iceland peasant. The mountains by which it is sheltered on both sides, are between 3000 and 4200 feet in height; and are clad with grass more than half way up to the summit. The cottages looked far superior to those in the south, and the churches, several of which we passed, had also a more decent appearance. In that of *Grund*, which we surveyed while the peasant was getting our horses ready, I was surprised to find an old portrait of General Monk hanging on the wall, to the right of

the altar, with a few acrostic lines, savouring strongly of the times in which they were written. How it came here is more than I could learn.

On the right hand side of the valley, we could observe *Nupufell*, famous for its having been the seat of the Icelandic printing press, which Bishop Gudbrand improved on his being installed into the see of *Holum*. Jon Jonson, whose father had brought the original press from Sweden about the year 1530, was prevailed upon by the Bishop to undertake a voyage to Copenhagen, in order to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the art, and, on his return, received this farm as a perpetual residence for himself and his successors in office; but the Bishop soon found the place inconvenient, on account of the distance, and got the press removed to Holum, where he rendered the establishment more complete.* On the same side of the valley lay *Thverâ Abbey*, which was erected by Biörn, Bishop of Holum, in the year 1155, and governed according to the rules of the Benedictine monks, by a series of five-and-twenty abbots, till the time of the Reformation, when it was secularised along with the other monasteries and abbeys on the island.†

A little farther on, we came to *Hrafnagil*, the residence of the very Rev. Magnus Erlandson, Dean of the Eyafiord district. On delivering a letter to him, which I had from the Bishop, he kindly told me, that, independent of the Bishop's recommendation, I should have found him ready to lend me all the assistance in his power, in the promotion of the good work in which I was engaged; and as he was to commence his autumnal visitation the day following, he promised to inform the clergy of his district of the new edition of the Scriptures, and request them to institute an inquiry into the state of their parishes with respect to Bibles, that the necessary quantity of copies might be sent to this quarter.

About four o'clock we arrived at the factory of *Akur-eyri*,

* Historia Ecclesiastica Islandiae, tom. iii. pp. 372—375. Havnia, 1772—1778, 4 vol. in 4to.

† Ibid. tom. iv. pp. 41—55.

where I was conducted by Captain Von Scheel into his house, and introduced to his lady, who, with her husband, strove to procure me all the comforts necessary for my refreshment, after so fatiguing a journey.

Akur-eyri, or, as it is called in Danish, *Oefiord*, is one of the principal trading stations on the northern coast of Iceland. It is situated on the west side of the Eyafiord bay, and consists of three merchants' houses, several storehouses and cottages, amounting in all to about eighteen or twenty. The trade is much the same with that of the other stations, consisting chiefly in bartering rye and other articles of foreign produce for wool, woollen goods, salted mutton, &c. It was formerly famous for its herring-fishery; the herrings frequenting the bay in such quantities, that between 180 and 200 barrels have been caught at a single draught; but they have of late years almost entirely disappeared, to the no small disadvantage of the peasantry in the district, who were furnished with them at the rate of a rixdollar per barrel. The Danish officers, Captain Von Scheel, and Captain Frisac, have resided here with their families during the time they have been in Iceland. The latter gentleman had just sailed with his family for Copenhagen, and Captain Von Scheel intended also sailing with his, by a vessel lying in the bay. There is a small garden or two attached to several of the houses; but the proper gardens lie behind the town, on the face of a hill, where they have an excellent southern exposure. They produce chiefly cole-rape and potatoes. The latter article came in season while I was at the place, which was considered very early in Iceland.

On the 5th, I was happy in having an opportunity of executing a commission which I had received from Bishop Vidalin. Previous to my departure from *Reykiavik*, his lordship jokingly said, that, on my arrival in the north, it would be in my power to settle a serious dispute which had arisen between two of his clergy, and that he invested me with full power to that effect. The subject of difference was a copy of the Scriptures, which had been lent from a church on the Mainland, but had been so long in possession of that of

Guernsey, that the priest refused to give it up to the church to which it originally and properly belonged. Nor can his unwillingness to part with the treasure be matter of surprise, when it is taken into consideration, that it was the only copy on an island lying at the distance of sixty miles from the Mainland, and that there was scarcely an individual among its inhabitants who could purchase a copy, though sold at the most moderate price, even supposing, what rarely or ever happens, that a Bible were exposed for sale in any of the northern districts. Finding that the clergyman was equally poor, I not only gave a copy to the parish gratis, but also one to himself, in the conviction, that without making the Scriptures part of his daily study, he would be but very indifferently qualified to instruct his parishioners in the will of God. The same evening I sold a Bible and a New Testament to a peasant, who had come to town from a neighbouring parish on purpose to buy them. His wife had been in town in the forenoon, and though she was requested to wait till the general distribution took place, the desire of obtaining copies excited in the family on her return, was so great, that her husband could get no rest till he set off on purpose to try if his application would not be more successful. I still endeavoured to persuade him to wait, as I had got so few copies; but he would take no refusal, and insisted, that if he did not get the Bible now, I would at least receive the payment, that he might be sure of a copy when it came. Besides what I gave him, he wished to have six New Testaments that each of his children might be furnished with a copy.

We were honoured, the day following, with a visit from Conferencerad Thorarinson, the Governor or Amtman of the northern and eastern quarters of the island. After bidding me welcome to Iceland, he expressed, in very high terms, his approbation of the object of my journey, and informed me that he had received an official communication from the Sysselmand of one of the eastern districts, relative to a quantity of Bibles and New Testaments which had arrived at one of the trading stations. After consulting with

him and Captain Von Scheel about the prosecution of my journey, I was induced to alter the plan I had originally formed, and, instead of taking the western route to Reykiavik, I resolved to proceed along the eastern and southern coasts of the island, as I had still sufficient time left, and the numerous rivers which meet the traveller in that direction are crossed with less difficulty in autumn than in spring.

The same day, I formed a most interesting and valuable acquaintance with the Sysselmand, Secretary Brieme, whom I accompanied in the evening to *Kiarnè*, the place of his residence, about two miles to the south of *Akur-eyri*. The situation is charming, having the whole valley straight before it, and the view of several other inferior valleys which break off from that of Eyafiord on the left hand. The house was undergoing a thorough repair; and the garden consisting of two divisions, with striking moral sentences written above the doors, was laid out with a great deal of taste, and watered by small streams which are diverted into it from a neighbouring rill. On entering the house, I was first shewn into the Secretary's office, which contains a collection of books of minor importance, such as miscellanies, journals, &c.; from the office I was conducted into his parlour, where I found two excellent libraries; the one consisting of books on law, political economy, &c.; those in the other were of a mixed nature, but all works of merit and importance. After a short interval, Mrs Brieme and the family were introduced, all of whom had something very interesting in their appearance; and having partaken of a dish of blue berries and cream, I was desired to walk up stairs and see Mrs B.'s library, which I found in a neat little room, well arranged, and consisting, for the most part, of choice theological works. Mrs B. is distinguished for her piety; and, besides attending to the management of a numerous family, she devotes a considerable portion of her time to the education of her children, and the improvement of her own mind. Her library contains about an hundred volumes. Among the English authors, of which she possessed translations, either in Icelandic or Danish, I observed Hervey's Meditations, New-

ton on the Prophecies, Blair's Lectures on Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Sherlock on Death, &c. She has Guldberg's and Bastholm's translations of the New Testament, and Bishop Balle's excellent Biblical Lectures. I was also pleased to find a copy of the Icelandic New Testament of 1807; which, from the marks it contained, afforded proof of its having been read with attention. The Secretary has two Icelandic Bibles in folio; but he nevertheless intends to purchase some copies of the new edition for the greater convenience of his children.

From this interesting apartment, I proceeded to a large room adjoining, which is properly the bed-room of the servants. The beds were clean and neatly arranged, and what is but too little attended to in Iceland, the place was well aired. It gave me peculiar pleasure to be informed, that this apartment also formed the domestic chapel. Here, the whole family, which consists of twenty members, assembles every evening, when a psalm is sung, and, after a chapter of the Bible has been read, an appropriate prayer is presented by the head of the family. Besides this exercise, the Secretary spends an hour or two, in the long winter evenings, in reading to the family, while at work; and, what cannot be sufficiently commended, he has substituted the reading of the histórical books of Scripture for that of the Sagas, which was formerly in universal use, and is still kept up by most of the peasants. Considered as furnishing many important data to the history of the north, which, without their aid, would be extremely dark and imperfect, the Sagas are certainly of great value, and, in the hands of the learned, may be turned to a good account; but to encourage their perusal by the common people, would only be to nourish those seeds of superstition and credulity which they are but too prone to cultivate, and which, in their vegetation, cannot but have a baleful influence on their sentiments and conduct in life.

The exercise of domestic worship is attended to, in almost every family in Iceland, from Michaelmas to Easter. During the summer months the family are so scattered, and

the time of their returning from their various employments so different, that it is almost impossible for them to worship God in a collective capacity; yet there are many families, whose piety is more lively and zealous, that make conscience of it the whole year round. The inhabitants of this, and several of the neighbouring vallies, are the most enlightened and intelligent of any on the island. They pay great attention to the education of their children; and, being favoured with a richer share of the bounties of nature than their brethren in other districts, they are better enabled to provide them with such books as are necessary for their instruction and improvement. Yet, even here, the Bible is a scarce book; and instances have been known of peasants offering five and six specie dollars, that is about £1, 5s. for a copy, without being able to obtain it.

On the 7th, which was the Lord's day, as there was no sermon in the vicinity, I ascended the rising ground behind the factory, and, falling in with a dry and sheltered spot, I lay down on the grass, and, after spending some time in prayer to the Father of Lights, and God of all my mercies, I took my Bible out of my pocket, and began to enjoy some of the heavenly strains of the sweet singer of Israel. While my thoughts were borne on high by the elevations of his sacred muse, I heard the notes of harmony behind me; which, on turning about, I found proceeded from a cottage, at a little distance to the left. The inhabitants, consisting of two families, had collected together for the exercise of social worship, and were sending up the melody of praise to the God of salvation. This practice is universal on the island. When there is no public service, the members of each family (or where there are more families they combine) join in singing several hymns; read the gospel and epistle for the day, a prayer or two, and one of Vidalin's sermons. Where the Bible exists, it is brought forward; and several chapters of it are read by the young people in the family. What an encouragement for the distribution of the scriptures!

CHAP. III.

Excursion to Holum—Mödruvalla Abbey—Clergymen of Audabrecka and Steinstad—Translator of Milton—Hialtadals-heidè—Ascent of the Vökul—Holum—Gisle Jonson—Cathedral—Gudbrand Thorlakson—Removal of the Press—Abolition of the School and Episcopal See—Situation and present state of Holum—MSS.—Icelandic Meals—Extent of Hospitality—Hot Springs—Return to Akureyri.

BEFORE setting out on my journey to the east, I resolved to make a short excursion to the neighbourhood of *Skagafiord*, in order to deliver two letters which I had received, to the Deans, from Bishop Vidalin, relative to the distribution of the Scriptures in that quarter. I accordingly left *Akur-eyri* in the forenoon of the 8th of August, in company with Captain Von Scheel, who had the kindness to conduct me as far as *Mödruvalla Abbey*, the residence of the Conferenceraad Thorarinson, where we arrived about one o'clock. The Abbey is agreeably situated a little to the north of the *Hörgâ* river, at the foot of a long range of very high mountains, which stretches along the west side of it, to the bay of *Eyafiord*. The houses are all built in a superior style, and the dwelling-house is constructed quite in the Danish fashion. The rooms, furniture, &c. are also finished with as much taste as those of most houses in Denmark. Nor is the church at all inferior. It was constructed, about twenty years ago, by carpenters brought from Denmark on purpose. The internal arrangement is neat and commodious; the pulpit being raised at the end, above the altar, is directly in front of the congregation, and not on one of the sides, near the middle, as is generally the case in the

Icelandic churches. It may contain about three hundred people.

We were received by the Conferenceraad and family in the most polite and engaging manner, and treated with an excellent collation. It gave me pleasure to find that this gentleman entered fully into the views and design of the Bible Society; and, on my mentioning how desirable it would be to have a similar institution formed in Iceland, he highly approved of the idea, and engaged to lend his aid in its formation. He also kindly undertook to have ready for me, by my return from Holum, a copy of the Bishop's letter to the Dean, authenticated by his own signature, to serve as an introduction to the clergy in the east, for which I had not made any provision before I left *Reykiavik*, not having had any idea that I should proceed in that direction.

A little past three, I took leave of this most respectable family, and proceeded up the dales accompanied by the clergyman, Sira Jon Jonson of *Audabrecka*, * whom the Conferenceraad had sent for on purpose to conduct me to the next station. For this favour I consider myself under great obligations to that gentleman, as I not only found in Sira Jon, the learned and intelligent clergyman, but the tender-hearted philanthropist, and the pious and zealous servant of Jesus Christ. He is forty-two years of age, rather little in stature, and remarkably active. He was five years corrector of the school at *Holum*, and one year employed in the same

* On travelling in Iceland, an Englishman would almost be tempted to believe that all the clergymen are Baronets, as the names *Sira* Jon, *Sira* Thomas, *Sira* Marcus, &c. are constantly ringing in his ears; but in ancient Scotch writings, we not only find "Sir," or "Schir," prefixed to the names of persons of different ranks, but it appears to have been given as a title to ordinary priests, till after the period of the Reformation. In English, "Sire" is made use of in addressing the Monarch, and the same is the case in French; nor can a more endearing term be used than that which characterises him as the "father" of his people. It is highly probable that the Icelandic *Sira* has the same signification—it being still common for the people in Norway, to address their clergymen by the title of "Father;" and "the fathers" is a term well known to the readers of Ecclesiastical history. See Dr JAMIESON'S *Etymological Dictionary of the Scotch Language*, and M'CRIE'S *Life of Knox*.

way in *Reykiavik*, where, by his access to the libraries, he has had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with foreign literature in a greater degree than most of his brethren. I was surprised to hear with what readiness he could quote the German and French authors, how perfectly he was versed in the principles of deism, and the intimate knowledge he had of the books that have been written in defence of revealed religion. He also quoted several English writers, particularly Young, who is his favourite poet. In his pastoral capacity he is strictly orthodox; zealous and indefatigable in his endeavours to instruct his parishioners in the doctrines and duties of religion; and strict in his regard to character, in the admission of communicants to the Lord's Supper. He is particularly attentive to the rising generation, and views their instruction as forming the weightiest and most important part of his ministerial charge. His parish is one of the most populous, containing upwards of four hundred souls; yet he keeps a register, in which their characters and circumstances are regularly entered.

Besides attending to the spiritual wants of his people, Sira Jon devotes a considerable portion of his time to the healing of their bodies, and is celebrated all over the north for his skill in medicine. Since last new year, he has had more than two hundred cases. His house is literally a Bethesda. On passing it, I alighted, and was conducted into a small room, which I found answered the purposes of a parlour, a library-hall, and an apothecary's shop. In the loft were several people who had come for medical advice, among whom I observed a female severely afflicted with the dropsy. His stock of foreign medicines is but small, owing to their high price, and the difficulty he has in obtaining them; and though he makes all the use he can of the plants which grow on his native soil, he finds numberless cases to which they cannot be applied. He seems to take great delight in the study of this art, and views it as, what it is in reality, a very suitable appendage to the pastoral character.

As we passed along the foot of the mountains, I was so charmed with the conversation of my interesting companion,

that I forgot the length of the road, and was quite regardless of the romantic nature of the scenery, which must otherwise have attracted a considerable share of my attention. We had scarcely entered the beautiful valley called *Oxnadal*, when Sira Jon made a sudden stop, and pointing to a house on the opposite side of the river, told me it was the abode of their celebrated poet. "What!" I exclaimed, somewhat taken by surprise, "is it there the translator of *Milton* resides?" "Yes," was his reply; "he is still alive, and it is some time since he finished his translation of that sublime poem." I now stopped my horse, and felt at a loss to determine whether I should return to the poet's that evening, or postpone my visit till my return from the west. The latter I was under the necessity of adopting, as my baggage horses had gone on before me.

After riding about an hour farther up the valley we reached *Steinstad*, the abode of Sira Halgrimr, who is clergyman of the church of *Backa* on the opposite side of the valley. He is a man of about six or eight and thirty, and has been twelve years priest of this parish, which contains nearly two hundred souls. He is distinguishedly serious and modest, and though he did not talk the hundredth part with me that Sira Jon did, I was no less pleased with the whole of his deportment and conversation. A deep sense of genuine piety seemed to penetrate his whole frame. His wife also appeared to be an excellent Christian, and exemplified in her own person and the cleanliness and arrangement of her house, that part of the Apostle's description of the Christian character: "Whatsoever things are of good report," &c. It was not long till she provided for us a good supper; and I was much gratified to observe the serious and grateful manner in which they partook of the bounties of Providence. It is universally the custom, in Icelandic families, to give thanks to God with clasped hands, before and after meals. When the first thanksgiving is finished, the guests turn to the master of the house, (the mistress never sits at table, being engaged in serving,) and say: *Gif mér mat med Gud fridr*, "Let me now partake with the peace of God," and

when the meal is over, and thanks have been returned to the Author of all good, they salute both master and mistress with a kiss, and thank them for their kindness.

From these clergymen I learned, that the standard of morality was never higher in the north of Iceland, than it is at the present day. Crimes are almost unheard of; and such as do make their appearance, are of the less flagrant and notorious kind. The sin of drunkenness, to which certain individuals were addicted, previous to the commencement of the war, has been in a great measure annihilated by the high price of spirituous liquors. Some would draw the conclusion from this circumstance, that the virtue of the Icelanders is merely accidental; but He who is perfectly acquainted with the sinful propensities of the human heart, hath taught *all* his disciples to pray: "Lead us not into temptation;" and I shall ever admire the propriety of the remark made by Sira Jon: "Our poverty is the bulwark of our happiness."

Happening, on the morning of the 9th, to meet one of the Deans, to whom I had letters from the Bishop, on his return from the factory, to which place he had rode the day before, I was fortunately enabled to make such arrangements with him relative to the disposal of the copies of the Scriptures which had been sent to *Skagafiord*, as rendered it unnecessary for me to proceed to that quarter. About ten o'clock, I rode in company with Sira Jon, and Sira Halgrimr, to *Bægisâ*, the dwelling of the poet, Sira Jon Thorlakson. Like most of his brethren at this season of the year, we found him in the meadow, assisting his people in haymaking. On hearing of our arrival, he made all the haste home which his age and infirmity would allow; and, bidding us welcome to his humble abode, he ushered us into the apartment, where he translated my countryman into Icelandic. The door is not quite four feet in height, and the room may be about eight feet in length, by six in breadth. At the inner end is the poet's bed, and close to the door, over against a small window not exceeding two feet square, is a table where he commits to paper the effusions of his

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muse. On my telling him, that my countrymen would not have forgiven me, nor could I have forgiven myself, had I passed through this part of the island without paying him a visit, he replied, that the translation of Milton had yielded him many a pleasant hour, and often given him occasion to think of England; but as his residence was so far north, and he had now lived so long without seeing any of Milton's countrymen, he had not entertained the most distant idea that ever he was to be favoured with such a gratification.

Of his translation of Paradise Lost, only the three first books have been printed. They are inserted in the xiii. xiv. and xv. volumes of the publications of the Icelandic Literary Society; but as this Society closed their labours in the year 1796, our poet was deprived of a channel through which he might communicate the remainder of his translation to the public. To print it at his own expense was altogether out of the question, as the whole of his annual income from the parishes of *Bægisâ* and *Backa* does not exceed thirty rix-dollars, * and even of this sum he must give nearly the one half to Sira Halgrimr, who officiates for him in the latter parish. The following lines he has composed in allusion to his poverty, the common lot of poets:

" Fátæktin er min Fylgicona,
Frá thvi eg kom i thennann Heim;
Vid höfum lafad saman svona,
Siötiu Vetur fátt i tveim;
Enn hvört vid skiliumz hédan af
Hann veit er ockur saman gaf."

Literally: " *Ever since I came into this world, I have been wedded to poverty, who has now hugged me to her bosom these seventy winters all but two; and whether we shall ever be separated here below, is only known to Him who joined us together.*"

That the entire poem has never been printed, is a real loss to Scandinavian literature; as it not only rises superior to any other translation of Milton, but rivals, and in many instances, in which the Eddaic phraseology is introduced, almost seems to surpass the original itself. Besides supporting its prevailing character, a quality required of every translator, Thorlakson has nicely imitated its peculiar turns, and

* About £6, 5s. Sterling.

more refined modifications; and though, on certain occasions, he has found it impossible to give the particular effect of certain sounds, yet this defect is more than compensated, by the multiplicity of happy combinations, where none exist in the original, which is to be ascribed to the richness the Icelandic possesses of such combinations, and the complete command the translator has had of his native language.

The kind of verse he has employed is that called *Fornyrdalag*, or "the versification of antiquity," which is remarkable for its natural ease and simplicity, and hardly requires any farther study than what regards the alliteration. It is of this kind of versification that the *Völuspâ* and other sublime poems in Sæmundar Edda consist: a circumstance which furnishes the strongest internal proof of their antiquity, as all the Skalds, who lived subsequent to the ninth century, prided themselves in rendering their poetry in the highest degree intricate and artificial. I was fortunate enough to obtain a well written copy of the Icelandic Milton, carefully revised by the translator himself, so that it may be regarded as possessing all the accuracy of an autograph. Should circumstances prove favourable, I may, perhaps, at some future period, get it printed in England.

For some years past, our poet has been occupied with a translation of Klopstock's Messiah. The first fourteen books are ready, and the fifteenth was begun last spring. He acknowledged, however, the impossibility of his reaching the bold and adventurous heights of that poet so happily as he had done the flights of Milton, being now upwards of seventy years of age. Alluding to his halting, he said, it could not be matter of surprise, since Milton had used him several years as his riding-horse, and spurred him unmercifully through the celestial, chaotic, and infernal regions. He has also translated Pope's Essay on Man, besides different Danish and German poems, and has composed numerous original pieces of a miscellaneous nature, the most beautiful of which is the poem of thanks to the British and Foreign Bible Society, inserted in the Appendix.

The situation of his abode is truly poetic. It lies near

the junction of the three beautiful vallies called *Hörgârdal*, *Öxnadal*, and *Bægisârdal*, the rivers of which also join at the same time, and form a broad and rapid stream. Close behind the farm is a number of beautiful cascades, at various heights up the mountain; and the prospect is bounded on every side by stupendous mountains, some of which exceed 4000 feet in height, and assume at the summit the most rugged and fantastic forms.

After spending about an hour at *Bægisâ*, we again took leave, and proceeded on to *Hörgârdal*, when Sira Jon Jonson bade me adieu, and took the road to his home, while Sira Halgrimr conducted me up the valley to *Mirkâ*, where he introduced me to the priest, whose name is also Sira Jon Jonson, a venerable and intelligent man, of seventy-three years of age. He had already been apprised of my arrival in the north, and had just finished his investigation relative to the Scriptures, from which it appeared, that though his parish be small, upwards of fifty of his parishioners had subscribed for the Bible. Having served up excellent cream, the aged pastor changed his clothes, and getting his horse saddled, insisted on accompanying me to the end of his parish. I was much edified by his pious conversation, and he seemed no less interested, on the other hand, by the accounts I gave him of the Bible Societies, and other instruments employed by Providence in these latter days for advancing the reign of righteousness and peace. Having procured me a guide for the following day at *Flaugasal*, the last house in the valley, he returned, after giving me the parting kiss, and wishing me the divine blessing on my undertaking. As the inhabitants of the cottage were extremely poor, I gave them a copy of the Scriptures. It was a treasure they had never had before, and what they did not suppose they would ever be so happy as to possess. The ground about the house being wet and boggy, I could not find any suitable place for my tent, so that I proceeded about two miles farther up the *heidè*,* and pitched it on the the western bank of the *Hörgâ* river.

* *Heidè*, a heath or mountain road.

One of the principal inconveniences to which the inhabitants of the vallies in the north of Iceland are exposed, is what they call the *Skrida*, or falling of part of the surface of the mountain into the valley below. It generally begins high up, by the disruption of a cliff, or the loosening of the earth after rain, which, accumulating fresh strength, and receiving new accessions as it proceeds, spreads wider and wider, and, with a tremendous noise, hurls every thing before it into the middle of the plain. It is no uncommon thing for whole cottages to be interred by such disruptions. In order to be secure from inundations, they are generally erected close to the foot of the mountains, and are thus constantly exposed to accidents of this nature. On viewing the threatening attitudes of the impending rocks, one must naturally suppose that few would have the courage to fix their habitation in so dangerous a situation; but necessity inspires with intrepidity, and habit wears off the impressions of fear. Indeed, I was forcibly struck one morning at my own insensibility of danger, when, on coming out of my tent, I found that I had pitched it the preceding evening directly at the base of a mountain, the cliffs of which wore the most menacing aspect. *

At half past five next morning, the peasant of *Flaugasal* came to guide us across the mountain, as my servant was not thoroughly acquainted with the road. The first six miles lay alternately across bogs and deep gullies, which have been cut by the mountain torrents. About nine we came to the termination of the deep bed of the river, along which we had passed, where it received its contents from a precipice, rising to a great height before us, and which it was necessary for us to pass ere we could proceed. The mountains on both sides were so precipitous, that we found it impossible any longer to ride along them, and betook ourselves to the snow, with which the hollow was filled, the ice below being sufficiently strong to prevent us from falling

* Such are the cliffs which Job calls ערוץ נחלים *arutz nchali*, "the terrible places of the valleys." Chap. xxx. 6.

through into the river. At times, we had to lead our horses over large fissures and rents, through which we could hear the water at a great distance below us. On arriving at the precipice, it became a question of no small difficulty how we were to get past it, especially as the rocks on both sides were almost equally steep, and the snow did not rise high enough that we could, without danger, attempt climbing them. The left hand side seemed the least formidable, as it was easier to get at the stones from the snow; but there was a rent in the ice which our guide would on no account pass. He accordingly led us up the opposite side, which was nearly perpendicular; the baggage being carried up by the men, while the poor horses, with much trouble, found their way alone. After we had made this troublesome ascent, we found, to our no small disappointment, that there was no possibility of proceeding, the melted snow having so completely loosened the stones which had fallen from the adjoining cliffs, as to form, if I may so express myself, a stony bog. We were, therefore, under the necessity of descending the same way we had climbed up. Happening to get first down, I led my horse to the opposite side, and succeeded in getting him across the rent in the ice, which, when my guide saw, he was ashamed not to follow. The horses and baggage were at length got over, though not without considerable trouble; and, about eleven o'clock, we found ourselves safe and well on the opposite mountain; for which I am peculiarly bound to praise God for his preserving care, —as I have since heard that a clerk, from a neighbouring factory, perished here some years ago, owing to his missing a step in endeavouring to cross the chasm.

We now renewed our ascent; and, about noon, we reached the summit of *Hialtadals-Yökul*, where we stopped a little, in order to give the horses some rest. Though the summit of the Yökul was at least 2000 feet above the level of the sea, we were surrounded by mountains of a still greater height, on which there was scarcely any snow, and which every where afforded the most lucid proofs of their submarine formation. What is remarkable, I found the tem-

perature of the atmosphere twelve degrees warmer in this hyperborean region than it was below in the valley.

Leaving the snow, we encountered a tract of large stones, forming, what the prophet calls, "a way not cast up," * through which we had to pass, till we arrived at the brow of a mountain, which we descended by a path that ran in a zig-zag direction, and brought us, at length, into the fine valley of *Hialtadal* I now rode forward alone, admiring, as I proceeded, the richness of the pasture, and the majestic grandeur of the scenery; and after passing several beautiful cottages, I came, about four o'clock, to *Holum*, the limit of my journey in this direction for the present year. I here received a cordial welcome from Mr Gisle Jonson (to whom I had a letter from the Governor), who was formerly con-rector of the school taught at this place, but on its removal to the south, he purchased a considerable part of the grounds belonging to the episcopal see, and has since employed himself in farming during the summer, and is at present occupied in the long winter evenings with a voluminous work to be entitled *Presbyterologia Holensis*, containing a complete biographical account of all the clergy who have lived within the diocese of Holum, from the Reformation down to the present day. He immediately led me into the hall of the *ci-devant* episcopal residence, and told me this should be my lodging during my stay at *Holum*.

After conversing some time on the object of my journey, and the great things which had been achieved at Holum in the publication of the Icelandic Bible, I went with Mr Jonson to see the church. It has been an elegant structure, and is still, beyond comparison, the best church in Iceland. With the exception of a small part of the roof, one of the windows, and the sacristy at the end, it is still entire, and wears scarcely any marks of decay. It is built of red sandstone, which abounds in a mountain called *Holarbyrde*, at no great distance up the valley. The roof is of wood. On each side are seven windows, besides two for the admission

* Jerem. xviii. 15.

of light into the portico at the west end, in which the bells are hung. The principal thing in the inside deserving of notice is the altar-piece, which contains an excellent representation of the crucifixion cut in wood, and finely gilt. There is also a large silver chalice on the altar; which, together with the altar-piece, was presented by the Pope to Jon Ogmundson, the first bishop of Holum. The wall on both sides of the altar is adorned with portraits of several of the Holum bishops. Next to the altar, on each side, is one of the worthy Gudbrand Thorlakson, taken at two different periods of his life. He lies interred directly before the altar, beneath a large marble stone, on which is the following brief but emphatic epitaph:

EXPECTO RESURRECTIONEM CARNIS
ET VITAM ETERNAM.
GUDBRANDUS THORLACIUS IESU CHRISTI PECCATOR.
ANNO CHRISTI, 1627,
20 JULII.

I stood here some time in silent meditation, revolving in my mind the laborious and indefatigable zeal of this excellent prelate, in preparing the Holy Scriptures for his countrymen. How he would have hailed my arrival at this place had he been in the land of the living! With what joy he would have listened to the news of the present circulation of the Bible! And how readily he would have assisted in the distribution of the present edition! But he now rests from his labours, and his works do follow him. His exertions to advance scriptural knowledge, and thereby to promote the glory of God, and the welfare of his brethren, did not die with him. They continue to operate at this day, and shall till time be no more. The following just eulogium of his character, is inserted in the annals of his country: "The venerable and most learned bishop, Gudbrand Thorlakson, was one of the most distinguished and useful men ever Iceland produced. He was most active in the propagation of the word of God, by means of those books and pamphlets,

which, for many years, he not only translated and printed, but also bound and prepared at Holum, and which have obtained a wide circulation throughout the island. Nor shall his memory cease while Iceland continues to be peopled, and the vernacular language to be spoken by her inhabitants." *

Several other epitaphs presented themselves before the altar, but few of them were legible, owing to the dust which has accumulated around the letters. On the outside of the railing which encloses the altar, is a bench on each side of the church: That on the right was occupied by the Bishop, and the male part of his family, and that on the left by the females. Behind these are benches the whole way back to the door, all of wood, and well finished. Above the door of the railing there is another wooden table, containing a carved representation of different parts of the gospel history; and on the right hand side from the altar, a wooden crucifix is suspended to the wall, which is at least ten feet in length, and wears a most disgusting appearance. Such images are seldom to be met with in Iceland; whereas, they are exhibited in almost every country church in Sweden and Denmark. Near to this crucifix is a baptismal font of exquisite workmanship. It consists of a large hard stone which, with amazing pains, has been rounded, hollowed out and polished, and is adorned with a variety of figures and several texts of Scripture. It bears the date of 1671.

On coming out of the church, I desired Mr Jonson to shew me where the printing-office stood, at which Gudbrand printed the first edition of the Icelandic Bible. Folding his hands together, and alluding to the removal of the school and episcopal see, "Alas!" said he, "we have also been deprived of our press, and the office has been converted into a stable!" Both of us lamented that the testaments of pious men should suffer from sacrilegious hands, and their property be applied in a manner different from that which they have unequivocally specified with their dying breath. Gud-

* Annalar Biörns a Skardsa, Tom. II. p. 140. Hrappsey, 1775, 4to.

brand erected the printing-press at much expense, and spa[illegible] no trouble in rendering it complete, many of the ute[illegible] being of his own invention and workmanship; and, in [illegible] last will, bequeathed it to the bishopric as a perpetual [illegible] perty, for the purpose of securing the constant supply [illegible] fresh editions of the Scriptures, and other useful books. It was however removed to Skalholt, in 1685, but restored to Holum again in the year 1704, where it remained till 1799, when it was removed to *Leirârgördum*, and placed under the direction of the Icelandic Literary Society.

Holum was first erected into an episcopal see in the year 1106, and continued in possession of its dignity and importance for nearly seven centuries, till, by an order of government, the two bishopries were combined in 1797, and the seat of ecclesiastical jurisdiction was fixed in *Reykiavik*, where the Bishop of Iceland now resides. This arrangement, as well as that in virtue of which the schools were united, has given universal dissatisfaction. In the northern and eastern districts in particular, it is attended with great inconvenience to the clergy, who are now obliged to repair all the way to *Reykiavik* on church business; where, in the course of a few weeks, they spend more of their scanty allowance than would have served them a whole year in the north. The want of the school is severely felt. While the two schools were separate, say the common people, they were of some value; but now, that they have been united, they are good for nothing. Nor are their complaints without ground; for *Holum* used to educate as many, if not more scholars, than the whole establishment at *Bessastad* does at present; and the trouble and expense at which the parents were in sending their children to the former place, were nothing compared to what it now costs them to send them to the south. Yet they would willingly submit to this inconvenience if the establishment were sufficiently large to receive all who wish to avail themselves of its advantages. In vindication of the Danish government be it said, that these innovations did not originate in any arbitrary measure on their part, but in the schemes and representations of cer-

tain native Icelanders, who endeavoured to make it appear that the change would be attended with the most beneficial effects to the island.

In consequence of these changes, the once respectable and far-famed *Holum* now begins to wear the appearance of a deserted village. The valley, which was intersected by upwards of fifty tracks worn by the horses that were brought thither on business, again resumes its orignal rusticity; and the place which used to be the resort of multitudes, is now visited by, perhaps, a single stranger in the course of the summer. It consists, at present, of the church; the house formerly occupied by the bishop, which is built of wood, and is the only house of two stories that I have seen in Iceland; * the farm houses belonging to Mr Jonson; a small building occupied by the relict of the late Bishop, behind which is the stable, where the printing-press formerly stood; and a little to the east of this is the school-house, now inhabited by two peasants. To the north of the church there is a long hollow tract, marking the direction of a subterraneous passage, which the turbulent Jon Areson, the last Catholic Bishop, had caused to be dug from the church, back to the mountains; that, when surprised at the altar by his enemies, he might, unknown to them, make a safe retreat, and collect his forces from the neighbouring vallies. On the opposite side of the church, the foundations of a house are still visible, in which an English lady is said to have dwelt, whom one of the Bishops had brought over in order to teach his daughters embroidery and other fine work. I could not learn her name; but the ruins are known by the name of "the English lady's house."

Holum is most beautifully situated at the termination of a high mountain called *Holarbyrde*, on each side of which a rich valley runs down into *Hialtadalr*, which extends in a northerly direction, till it reaches *Holum*, when it winds

* Of the former episcopal residence, which stood on the same spot, and was built by Bishop Gudbrand in the year 1576, I only saw two large beams, which look fresher than I would have supposed, from their age.

round to the west, and gradually opens into the *Skagafiord*, into which its river is discharged, at the distance of about fifteen miles below this place. The mountains on every hand are of an amazing height, and that of *Tindastol*, which is famous for its rich minerals, forms a grand boundary to the prospect on the west. A little to the south of *Holum* lies a cottage, called *Hof*, the first place in the valley that was inhabited. I was shewn a large stone, which was used as an altar, in the times of heathenism, at this place, the name of which indicates its having been a place of sacrifice.

Though no less than three editions of the Icelandic Bible were printed in this valley, scarcely a copy is now to be found among its inhabitants. They were overjoyed to hear that provision had been made for supplying their wants; and the individuals who received copies from me, expressed their gratitude in the most lively manner. By my visit to Holum I obtained a manuscript of considerable importance; a translation of the Prophets, and the two books of the Maccabees, in Icelandic, by Gisle Jonson, Bishop of Skalholt. This MS. was written at Skalholt in the years 1574 and 75, and is the more valuable, as Gudbrand is supposed to have made use of it when translating the Bible; and its existence is spoken of only by way of conjecture, both by Bishop Harboe, in his brief account of the Icelandic Bible, * and Bishop Jonson in the ecclesiastical history. † I also obtained a MS. translation of the Apocryphal books of the New Testament, and the third and fourth books of Ezra.

By the whole of Mr Jonson's family I was treated with the utmost kindness and attention. On my arrival I was served with coffee, and towards evening Mrs Jonson provided an excellent dish of boiled rice and milk, which was followed by smoked mutton boiled and hashed, and served up in a large pewter plate, out of which we ate in common with our forks. Our only beverage was milk and rich cream. The ordinary diet of the Icelanders is extremely simple. In the morning they breakfast on *skyr*, a dish of coagulated

* Dänische Bibliothek, viii. Stück. † Tom. iii.

milk, resembling our curds in Scotland, only it is sour; to which they use plenty of sweet milk or cream, and sometimes give it a peculiar flavour, by mixing with it blue and juniper berry juice. Their dinner consists of dried fish and butter; the latter of which is generally sour, it being a common practice to allow it to acquire a strong degree of rancidity, after which it will keep for almost any length of time. For supper they have either *skyr*, a little bread and cheese, or porridge made of the Icelandic moss. To a foreigner this is not only the most healthy, but the most palatable of all the articles of Icelandic diet. On particular occasions, such as Sundays, and other holidays, they eat boiled mutton, rye-porridge, and milk. At Christmas, the first day of summer, and harvest-home, extra feasts are given to the servants, consisting of fresh mutton, milk-porridge, and bread—an article which this class of the inhabitants seldom taste throughout the year. Their common beverage is *blanda*, a kind of whey mixed with water; the whey itself, which they call *syra*; and milk, which they generally drink warm.

When the hour of rest approached, I was conducted by my kind host and hostess into a back apartment, where was an ancient but excellent bed, on which, I had every reason to conclude, more than one of the Holum Bishops had reposed. A ceremony now took place, which exhibits, in the strongest light, the hospitality and innocent simplicity of the Icelandic character. Having wished me a good night's rest, they retired, and left their eldest daughter to assist me in pulling off my pantaloons and stockings, a piece of kindness, however, which I would a thousand times rather have dispensed with, as it was so repugnant to those feelings of delicacy to which I had been accustomed. In vain I remonstrated against it as unnecessary. The young woman maintained it was the custom of the country, and their duty to help the weary traveller. When I had got into bed, she brought a long board, which she placed before me to prevent my falling out; and, depositing a bason of new milk on a table close to my head, bade me good night, and retired. Such I afterwards found to be universally the custom

in Icelandic houses. Where there are no daughters in the family, the service is performed by the landlady herself, who considers it a great honour to have it in her power to shew this attention to a stranger.

It is also worthy of notice, that the task of loosing the sandals of the men devolves on the female servants; a custom which elucidates the declaration of John the Baptist: "There cometh one mightier than I after me, *the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose*," Mark i. 7.

On the 11th I would have left *Holum* early in the morning, but it blew a violent storm, accompanied with rain, not only on the mountains, but also in the valley below. As it began to clear up towards noon, though the wind still continued, I ordered my servant to get the horses ready, much against the will of my kind host and hostess, who strongly represented to me the danger of crossing the Yökul in such weather, and told me of numbers who had been carried away by the wind, and dashed to pieces in some of the adjoining chasms; but, as I had no time to lose, and the storm began to subside, I succeeded in tearing myself away about two o'clock, and was accompanied by Mr Jonson to the farther end of the valley. On our way we visited the hot springs of *Reykialaug*, which are situated on the west side of the river by which the valley is divided, at the distance of six miles from *Holum*. They are three in number, but of small note, not being kept clean, and are but seldom used for bathing by the family in the neighbourhood. No incrustations are observable about them, nor have they any uncommon taste. The temperature of the largest was 114°, of a smaller 104°, and of the smallest 124°.

Having reached my servant and the horses, Mr Jonson parted from me, after having obtained a promise that, if possible, I would pay him a visit next year, when I had finished my tour round the west country. The ascent of the mountain-pass, called in Icelandic *Kumpr*, I found very difficult, on account of its steepness. I was obliged to dismount, and drive my horse on before me, which seemed no

less spent than myself before reaching the summit. About six in the evening we gained the top of the snow, when we began to descend on the other side; but the declivity of the Yökul was so steep, and the snow so much softened by the rain, that my horse could not keep his feet under me, nor could I possibly walk myself, so that taking him at the length of the bridle, and dragging him a little on, we both slid down, without halting, to the distance of fifty yards, when we came again to stones and clay. Having taken this position, I enjoyed the sight of my man and the baggage horses sliding towards me in the same manner, though at times their descent looked rather serious, from the greater velocity with which the heavier horses were borne down upon those that went before. I now took care to avoid the place which had given us so much trouble the preceding morning; and stretching further to the right than the way the guide had taken us, we reached the *Hörgá* by a much easier and safer route. Crossing this river, which was considerably swelled by the rain, we proceeded on to *Flaugasæl*, where we arrived just as it began to get dark, completely drenched by the rain, which had again come on as we descended from the mountains.

On the 12th I struck my tent about ten o'clock, and traced my steps back to *Mírká*, where the worthy pastor was waiting my arrival, together with his son, who had come from a cottage in the neighbourhood, in order to purchase a copy of the Bible. On opening one of my boxes, I was surrounded by an interesting group, each of whom got copies to look at, and made such simple, but pious and apposite remarks, as both astonished and affected me. One young peasant remarked, that I was going round the world like the Apostles, carrying the Gospel to every creature; a truth which I never felt with such force as on this occasion. When engaged in preaching, I fancied my employment, in many respects, resembled that of the Apostles; but they taught an infallible doctrine, whereas I was liable to err. Now, however, the case was different. I came, not with the words of man, but with the pure, unadulterated oracles of divine truth; so that

I could apply to my mission what our Saviour declared to the inspired teachers of the Gospel: "Verily, verily, I say unto you: he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me."* A fresh instance of the general intelligence of the Icelanders occurred on this occasion. A servant girl of about sixteen, happening to take up a map of the island which I had dropped, quite astonished me, by pointing to the different places with all the readiness of a professed geographer. Finding that she was very desirous of having a New Testament, I made her a present of one, which she instantly kissed, and seemed quite transported with the gift.

I was here under the necessity of leaving one of my horses, which had got lame in one of his feet, to the care of the clergyman; and, borrowing a horse from him to *Akur-eyri*, I sent my servant on to that place with the baggage, while I proceeded round by the Abbey. As I passed down the valley, the people left their hay-making, and came running to the road in order to see me, and have some conversation about the Scriptures; when they wished a thousand blessings might descend on me, and the good Christians who had sent me to Iceland. Some of them were very particular in their inquiries about the reasons that induced us to do so much good to Iceland; while others satisfied themselves with respect to the size of the present edition, and the source from which it had been derived. Calling, by the way, at *Audabrecka*, I spent about an hour with Sira Jon, and then went on, accompanied by him to the Conferenceraad's, where I met with the same cordial reception as before, and was pressed to stay; but the advanced state of the season imperiously called for my making the best of my way to the east: so that after partaking of some refreshment, and receiving a number of letters of recommendation to the eastern quarter of the island, together with a travelling directory, which the Conferenceraad had the kindness to make out for me, I took leave, and was conducted by one of his sons till within a little way of the factory, at which I arrived about half past ten o'clock.

* John xiii. 20.

CHAP. IV.

Journey to Vopnafiord—Public Worship and Catechising at Hâls—Icelandic Dress—Pauperage—Piety—Skialfandafliot—Lava—Salmon River—Husavik—Hot Springs of Reykiahverf—Greniadarstad—Lava, near Myvatn—Traces of Volcanic Eruptions in the Bible—Eruptions of Leirhnukr and Krabla—Church of Reykiahlid—Myvatn—Sulphur Mountain—Hot Springs—Ascent of Krabla—Boiling Pool in the Crater—Obsidian Mountain—Desert—Dangerous River—Grimstad—Rural Happiness—Computation of Time—Desert—Hof in Vopnafiord.

HAVING digested a plan with the Secretary, relative to the circulation of the Scriptures in this part of the island, and furnished myself with two fresh horses, I took my departure from *Akur-eyri* in the afternoon of the 13th of August. Of the kindness shewn me at that place by Captain Von Scheel and Mr Hemmert, as also by Mr Gudman, the supercargo of a brig lying in the roads, I shall ever retain a grateful remembrance. To Captain Von Scheel in particular, I am under the deepest obligations, for the very distinguished attention and accommodation which I experienced during the time we were together.

A little above the factory, I crossed the river of *Eyafiord*, which, before falling into the bay, divides into a number of streams, and forms several beautiful islands; whence the bay is called *Eyafiord*, or Island-bay. During my stay in the neighbourhood, I had often surveyed the opposite mountain, called *Vadla-heidé*, by which the districts of *Vadlé* and *Thingey* are divided from each other, and anticipated the extensive prospect I should have on gaining its summit; but the atmosphere was foggy, and I had scarcely got half way

up the ascent, when I found myself completely enveloped in mist. Happening, however, to look behind me, I was much interested by a bird's-eye view, which I obtained through a picturesque hole in the mist, and which, though small, displayed several windings of the river, and a church or two, with a number of cottages that crowded into the scene. Having descended about two miles on the other side of the mountain, the mist began to dissipate, and disclosed the beautiful valley of *Fnioskâ*, which lay directly before me. The mountains on both sides of this valley differ from those to the west, by their being free from crags, and almost entirely covered with grass. About a hundred years ago, the valley exhibited one of the finest forests in Iceland, but now there is not a single tree to be seen—such has been the havock made by the inclemency of the seasons, and the improvident conduct of the inhabitants. The remains of this forest are still visible on the east side of the river, which divides the valley, in the numerous stumps of birch trees which present themselves, some of which exceed two feet in diameter.

Proceeding a little up the east side of the valley, I arrived at *Hâls*, where there is a good church, and an excellent glebe. Immediately on approaching it, I easily perceived that the clergyman must be in good circumstances, from the verdure and extent of the *tûn*,* and the number of cows, sheep, and goats, that were grazing around. Though nearly dark, Sira Sigurdr, the clergyman, had not yet left the meadow, where he was assisting his people at the hay; but, on being

* The *tûn* signifies the ground immediately connected with the farm-houses in Iceland, which, as it is the only part that receives any manure, is always conspicuously distinguished from the rest of the ground by its superior verdure. The term had formerly the same signification with the English *town*, hence Eskilstuna, Sigtuna, &c. in Sweden; but it is now exclusively used in the above sense. It has the same meaning in the Anglo-Saxon translation of ἀγρος, Luke xiv. 18. *Ic bohte anne tun*, where Ulphilas has *land baukta*. Vul. "villam emi." In the poetic Edda, we read that the Einheriar daily contend in "Othins tunom," for which the prosaic Edda has "i gardinn," in the court or open space before the houses. Compare Vafthrud, ver. xli. with the xxxv. Dæmisage.

informed of my arrival, he made the best of his way home, and received me at a little distance from the house, in the kindest and most affectionate manner. Before reaching the door, we were met by his wife, who ran, asking, "Where is my guest?" and gave me a hearty welcome. I had scarcely entered the parlour, when I was served with excellent coffee; and, as there was plenty of room in the house, I was desired not to pitch my tent, but to accept of such accommodation as they could afford. Having read the letter which I delivered to him from the Bishop, to whom he is related, Sira Sigurdr told me, he did not doubt but that his parishes, which are three in number, would take a considerable quantity of Bibles and New Testaments. A few copies of the edition of the New Testament, published in 1807, had been sent him for distribution; but they only went a little way, and tended rather to make the wants of the people more visible than afford them any adequate supply. He assured me they would buy copies with the utmost cheerfulness.

The next day, being the Lord's day, I was happy to find it was his turn to conduct divine worship at this place. There is only one service in the Icelandic churches, which seldom begins in any part of the island before noon, and in some places not before two o'clock. The reason of the hour being so late is, that the Icelanders have their sheep to collect and milk, the horses on which they are to ride to seek and drive home, and themselves to dress; which circumstances, taken in connexion with the length of the way many of them have to come, renders it impossible for them to meet sooner.

A little before church time, the mistress of the house and her two daughters made their appearance, richly dressed in the complete Icelandic costume, and had it been another day, I should certainly have spent some time in examining the various articles of which it was made up; but the nature of the exercises we were called to engage in, demanded the utter exclusion from the mind of all such trivial subjects, and reminded us of the necessity of another kind of clo-

thing—" the robes of righteousness, and garments of salvation." *

Though the morning was rainy, the church was well filled. Having gone through the altar-service, the clergyman went to the door, and taking a female by the hand, who had stood

* Though I do not recollect seeing a richer Icelandic dress than that of the clergyman's wife at *Hils*, yet, as I had afterwards frequent opportunities of observing the costume of the Icelandic females in general, I shall here present the reader with a description of it.—Next to the body they wear a *Skirta*, or shift, which is generally made of single wadmel. and is fastened round the neck by means of a silver or brass button. Besides two or three blue petticoats of the same material, to which they give the name of *fat*; they have in front a *svinta* or apron of blue cloth, bordered with black velvet, and hung above with an ornament of silver or gilt brass. The bodice or waist-piece, (*upphlutur*) consists of red or black wadmel, on the back of which are three stripes of velvet covering the seams, and in front are two broad borders of the same stuff, elegantly ornamented with five or six silver clasps, by which it is fastened, and a profusion of lace embroidery. Exactly beneath the bodice, the petticoats are fastened by means of a velvet girdle (*lindi*,) which is studded with ornaments of polished stones, plate, &c. Round the neck is worn a thick ruff of black velvet (*strutur*,) about two inches in breadth, and nicely embroidered with silver. The *treya*, or jacket, is made to fit close to the body, and consists of black wadmel; the sleeves also sit tight, and are ornamented at the wrists with *Erma-knappar*, or buttons silver-gilt, and sometimes exhibiting the initials of the husband and wife. Over all goes the *Hempa*, or cloak of black cloth, the borders of which are lined with velvet of the same colour, and tied in front by means of clasps. The stockings (*Sockar*) are of dark blue, or red worsted, and the shoes of the Icelanders are made of seal or sheep skins, by cutting a square piece the length of the foot, and sewing up an indentation made at each end, so as to make them fit close. Excepting the pointed toe, they exactly assume the form of the foot, and are kept on by two leathern thongs, one of which binds from side to side across the instep, and the other, which is fixed at the heel, is brought round the ancle, and tied once or twice about the leg.

Such of the Icelandic females as are in better circumstances, suspend elegant silver chains from the neck, with large medals of the same metal, on which are different figures and inscriptions of a religious nature.

The most curious and fantastic part of the female costume is the head-dress. It consists of a *faldur* or turban made of white linen, and stiffened with an immense number of pins. It is generally between fifteen and twenty inches in height, roundish where it leaves the head, but instantly assuming a flattish shape, and after rising to the height of about twelve inches, by a curve backwards, it again bends forward, and terminates in a square form, not less than six inches in breadth. It is fastened to the head by means of a black, or dark coloured silk handkerchief, which is wound round it several times, and, falling close behind the ears, completely hides the hair. The bridal-dress is still richer, espe-

ICELANDIC DRESSES.

Engraved by W. & D. Lizars Edin.r

ICELANDIC FEMALE IN HER BRIDAL DRESS.

without all the while, he led her forward to her seat, and gave her a very appropriate address relative to her obligations arising from the experience of the Divine goodness in child-birth, and the importance of attending to the education of the two young immortals who had been committed to her care. He then prayed for her, pronounced the blessing, and concluded by giving her the Apostolic salutation. His sermon was founded on Psalm ciii. 10, 11, which he illustrated from the history of the Israelites, as referred to in the gospel for the day. Both in his sermon and prayer, he took particular notice of the mercy and loving kindness of God, in sending them a more abundant supply of the Holy Scriptures. When the ordinary service was over, he went into the middle of the church, and collecting the young people of both sexes around him, he catechised them, for about half an hour, from the subject of his sermon. This he did, with the view of gratifying a wish I had expressed the preceding evening, of being present at an Icelandic catechising. The

cially the *faldur*, which is then elegantly adorned with a fillet embroidered with gold lace.

Their common working dresses in summer, consists of nothing more than the shift and petticoats of white wadmel, with a blue cap, the top of which hangs down at one side of the head, and terminates in a red or green tassel like a hussar's foraging-cap. This, with blue petticoats, and a blue jacket, forms the home dress of the richest female on the island.

The costume of the men is more simple, and greatly resembles that of the peasants in Norway, and different parts of the interior of Sweden. They have shirts of wadmel, and blue waistcoats, jackets and trowsers of the same kind of cloth, only double wrought; the borders of which are edged with a small red stripe, not even excepting the neck. They also wear caps like the women when at home, but have broad-brimmed hats for putting on when they go abroad; on which occasions they also wear a large cloak, or *Hempt*, as a defence against the rain or cold.

The civil officers dress according to the Danish fashion, and the priests are clothed with black garments cut in the same manner. Sometimes they wear boots, but generally they have black worsted stockings and pantaloons, which are rather awkwardly contrasted by the white sandals, and the still whiter thongs by which they are tied round the ancle. Their church robes differ in nothing but their coarseness, from those worn by the clergy in Denmark, if we except the large white ruff, instead of which, the Icelandic clergy wear bands. The Bishop, however, assumes the ruff at ordinations, or on other solemn occasions.

exercise proved interesting in the highest degree. Though wholly unapprized of his intention, the youth replied to the questions he put to them, in the readiest and most apposite manner, and discovered an acquaintance with the cardinal points of revealed religion, which I have seldom seen equalled by those whose spiritual advantages are vastly superior. This exercise, equally instructive to the young and the aged, is but seldom attended to during the summer months, but in winter it forms a conspicuous and important part of public duty.

Before dismissing the congregation, he gave them intimation of the new supply of Bibles, and desired such as wished to have copies to give him their names; and we had scarcely got into the house, when it was crowded with people; who, supposing the number of copies might prove insufficient, pushed forward with uncommon eagerness, each calling out, "Put me down for a Bible—me, for a Bible, and a New Testament—me, for *three* New Testaments," &c. While looking at the copy I had given to Sira Sigurdr, as a specimen, some of them seemed rather concerned about the smallness of the volume, (this being the first octavo edition of the Icelandic Bible;) but on being told by their pastor that it contained all the *canonical* books of Scripture, they were satisfied, and expressed the peculiar pleasure they felt in the idea that it would now be in their power to furnish their children with this infallible directory.

Inquiring into the circumstances of a poor-looking old man, whom I saw employed in the most menial services, I found he was, what is called in Icelandic, a *Nidursetningr*, i. e. a poor person, who lives on the parish, has no fixed dwelling place, but is supported, by turns, among the inhabitants. As there are no alms-houses for the reception of the poor in Iceland, every farmer is obliged to maintain such as are sent him by the Hreppstiori, to whom the care of the poor is committed, and in case of refusal, is subjected to a very heavy penalty. To prevent the parishes from being over-burdened, the greatest care is taken that none be allowed to settle in any other than that in which he was born,

except he can give security, that neither he, nor any of his family, shall ever be burdensome to the public. When any family happens to be so reduced, that it can no longer maintain itself, it is separated, and the members placed out in different households; and, if the husband, or wife, belong to a different part of the island, he is passed on to his native parish, perhaps never more to behold the wife of his youth. On such occasions, a scene presents itself the most affecting that can possibly be conceived. Though there may not be a single morsel in the house, with which to satisfy the craving appetite of four or five young starvelings, and though they are themselves emaciated with hunger, still they cleave to one another, and vow that famine, and even death itself, would be more supportable than a separation.

Monday the 15th, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, I left *Hâls*, accompanied by the clergyman, his son, and one of his servants. Immediately on setting out, we all took off our hats for about the space of five minutes, and implored the Divine mercy and protection. This laudable and impressive custom, is universally practised in such parts of Iceland as remain uncontaminated by the example of those foreigners who "live without God in the world." Before crossing, and after having crossed a river, the genuine Icelander also moves his hat, in token of the sense he entertains of his dependence on the Supreme Being; and the fishermen, when they put to sea, after they have rowed the boat into quiet water, at a short distance from the shore, take off their hats, and send up a prayer, which they call *Varsaungr*, committing themselves to the protection of God, and soliciting his blessing on their labour. The road lay direct east, through a wide and fertile dale called *Liosavats-skard*, near the east end of which lies the beautiful and extensive *Liosavatn*,

"A spotless mirror, smooth and clear,"

the margin of which exhibits in various places a bed of ancient lava, whose blackness is rendered still darker by the crystalline appearance of the water. This lake, which fur-

nishes in great abundance the species of trout called *Forelles*, is in many parts of unfathomable depth, and has been supposed to have an immediate communication with the sea, on account of the alleged ebb and flow of the water; but this circumstance is disproved by Mr Mohr,* who spent two days here, and though he fixed several poles within the water-mark, could not perceive the least variation. Sira Sigurdr and his son having conducted me to the lake, were prevailed on to return, while the servant, a well-dressed, intelligent young man, undertook to see me safely across the *Skialfandafliot*.

Skirting the northern margin of the lake, we turned the south-east corner of a long hilly tract, called the *Kinn*, and after crossing a broad morass, by means of a road of turf resembling an earthen wall, we proceeded along the west side of an ordinary mountain, which was clothed with dwarf willows and blue-berry bushes. The berries were quite in season, and afforded a most delicious refreshment. The way-marks, called in Icelandic, *Vardar*, consisting of heaps of stones raised in a pyramidal form, were in excellent order, and at a short distance from each other, which, being an accommodation of no small importance to the traveller, brought to my mind Jeremiah xxxi. 21. "Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the high-way, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities."

On turning round the north end of the mountain, my attention was arrested by a noble cataract at some distance, called *Goda-foss*. The whiteness of the vast body of water, which was poured from a considerable height, and the cloud of vapour arising from the spray, were beautifully contrasted with the blackness of the lava on both sides. *Skialfandafliot* is one of the largest rivers in the north of Iceland. It is supposed to take its rise in the *Klofa Vökul*, not far from the opposite side of the island, and derives its name from the rapid and undulating motion with which the waters hurry forward to the ocean. They are of a light bluish

* Forsog til en Islandsk Naturhistorie, &c. p. 375, Kiöbenhavn, 1786, 8vo.

colour, like that of milk strongly diluted with water, which must be owing to the numerous accessions of clear streams that it receives after leaving the Yökul.

On crossing this river, which we accomplished on horseback with great ease, notwithstanding its extreme breadth, the guide returned, and my servant and I pursued our course for some time along the eastern bank, having a low mountain on the right, through the barren soil of which some specimens of trap-rock and sub-marine lava presented themselves, till we were interrupted by a tract of ordinary lava, consisting of broken crusts of enormous magnitude, and containing profound gloomy chasms, which it required the utmost stretch of our ingenuity, combined with the instinctive skill of our steeds, to avoid. The rugged and forbidding aspect of the lava was, in some measure, enlivened by the verdure of a number of birches that reared their heads through the cracks and rents on both sides of the path. In the course of an hour we gained the termination of the mountain, and entered *Adaldal*, an extensive valley, in which are a number of red conical hills, with craters nearly half filled with slag, and a torrent of lava which has issued from some volcano in the vicinity of *Myvatn*, and continued its course along the *Salmon River* (Laxá) which runs down the east side of the valley, till it has fallen in with the *Skialfanda* bay; when, turning round to the left, it has poured its fiery current along the east side of the *Skialfandafliot*, and formed the tract just described. What excited peculiar interest, was part of a *bœ*, or farm, which the lava has attacked in its progress, when it has burnt and carried along with it one half of the house, and left the other half in such a ruinous state, that were it not for the regularity of the stones which mark the site of the walls, it could no longer be traced The soil which, in the course of time, has collected on the lava, yields excellent pasture, and we passed through the midst of a numerous flock of sheep, the property of the Sysselmand, whose house is most grotesquely situated a little up the valley, and on whom I would have called, had I not been informed of his absence from home.

About six o'clock we arrived at the western bank of the *Laxâ*, which pursues its meandering course round the small capricious promontories raised by the lava, now moving heavily along, and now rushing down a gentle declivity with accelerated speed. Now and then a solitary salmon leaped above the surface of the water, and I was struck on finding a variety of small rills flowing from the river into the domed cavities of the lava, whither the fish retreat, which accounts for their being caught at times in holes in the middle of the valley. This river is celebrated for the quantity and richness of its salmon; but it has entirely disappointed the hopes of the proprietors this summer, and scarcely a single salmon has been caught. Following the windings of the river for about an hour, we came opposite to the ferry-house called *Nupum*; and after hallooing for some time, a woman and a little girl came to ferry us over. Looking at the boat, I observed to my servant that we must have mistaken the place; and, on being told that it was the proper ferry, and that it was the ferry-boat which was rowing towards us: "Well," said I, "but I certainly will not venture my riding-horse in that vehicle." "Nor need you," was his reply; "the horses are to *swim* across, and the boat is only for ourselves and the baggage." The answer was satisfactory; but my curiosity was now excited by a mode of passage which I had never before witnessed. Having unloaded the horses, we drove them into the stream. They were almost instantly beyond their depth, and after a good deal of exertion and snorting, they reached in safety the opposite bank, and, giving themselves a shake or two, they set off for the house, being enticed by the verdure of the *tún*. It was my intention to have proceeded further, but reflecting on the time it would take to get the baggage on the horses again, I resolved to stay all night at *Nupum*, and pitched my tent close to the ferry, on the eastern bank of the river. The evening was serene. The sun, who was yet considerably above the opposite mountain of *Kaldakinn*, reflected his beams on the river, and illumined my tent. Joy and content filled my heart, and I praised God for the mercies of the day.

The following morning the fog was so close, that I could only see a few yards around me. Leaving a Bible with the proprietor of the ferry, I rode on across a barren desert tract, to a farm called *Laamyrè*, from which, in order to shorten the way for the baggage horses, I caused my servant to proceed with them in an easterly direction, while, accompanied by the Hreppstiori, who "was to me instead of eyes," I pursued the path to *Husavik*, where I arrived about eleven o'clock, and was kindly received by Mr Baagoe, factor for the house of Mr Wolff in Copenhagen. This gentleman, together with his lady, did their utmost to serve me, and were by no means satisfied with my having resolved to make my stay with them so short. Nor could I indeed have spent a day or two in a more agreeable family; but having learned that several boxes of Bibles, which I expected to have found at this port, had, by mistake, been forwarded to another quarter of the island, it did not require much time to mature a plan for the circulation of the copies to be sent the following year, and it was of importance for me to advance on my journey, while the weather and roads continued favourable. Mr Baagoe is a native of Denmark, but has spent many years in Iceland; and is an ornament to his country, not only by the good example which he sets the Icelanders in horticultural labours, but, what is of infinitely greater moment, by his strict attention to the duties and interests of religion. He is the only Dane on the island that I have heard of who practises family worship.

While dinner was preparing, I was conducted by Mr B. into his garden, which I found well laid out, and in excellent order. Besides potatoes, cabbages, and greens, which grew in great abundance, it contained pretty large beds of parsnips, turnips, carrots, beans, pease, parsley, sallad, and onions. I certainly did not expect to meet with so many different vegetables in such perfection near the north-east corner of Iceland; but this instance shews how much the ungenial influence of climate may be subdued by the energy of persevering and indefatigable industry. To this nursery the peasants, from a considerable distance, flock for seeds; and, in

the hands of its benevolent proprietor, it is rendered a source of relief to the poor in the vicinity.

Husavik, which is famous for its being the place where Gardar, the second adventurer to Iceland, fixed his habitation, and spent the winter of 864, * is situated at the termination of an inlet on the east side of the *Skialfandafiord*, and consists of several stately wooden houses, a sulphur manufactory, and a number of cottages belonging to the workmen. Lying at the height of more than a hundred feet above the level of the sea, the different articles of commerce are removed to and from the boats by means of a crane, which is fixed on the brow of a perpendicular precipice close to the store-houses. The harbour is reckoned one of the most dangerous on the island, on account of the rocks in the entrance, and its exposure to north and north-west winds, by which enormous masses of Greenland ice are driven into it. To secure a vessel here, no less than four strong cables are requisite, and each of these is borne up by fourteen or sixteen large casks, to prevent its coming in contact with the rocks. The atmosphere being foggy, I was denied a sight of the coast, which I was told is very bold and craggy; but what I saw of the neighbourhood, was sufficient to convince me that it now wears a very different appearance from what it did in the time of Gardar, there not being a single vestige of wood of any kind. †

A little to the east of the factory, at the sea-side, lies a low mountain called *Hallbiarna-stadarkamb*, which is remarkable for the quantity of petrified and crystallized marine productions that are found in it. The mountain itself consists of clay and sand, and is, for the most part, covered with grass. The shells are mostly of the *Venus Islandica*, but are much smaller than any now found on the shores in the vicinity. Some of them are filled with the same kind of clay with that of the hill: others contain calcareous spar, the crystals of which differ as to shape and colour, some of

* Landnámabok, p. i. cap. I.

† "Var thi hógr mi fiom fialls oc fióro." Landnámabok.

them being white, some brown, and some of a reddish colour; the most of them are six-sided, but some, besides the six larger, have twelve smaller sides, and others are cubic. They are found at different heights in the hill, but the uppermost are in the greatest perfection. *

Besides salted mutton, wool, &c. *Husavik* has, till very lately, exported annually a large quantity of refined sulphur; a mineral which has been produced in abundance by the mines around Myvatn, but is now more scanty, owing to their having been overwrought, through the injudicious conduct of the peasants, by whom the sulphur is dug up and carried on horseback to the factory. With a view to the mines recovering the effects of this exhaustion, the most of the beds are at present suffered to enjoy a period of rest. They lie at various distances from *Husavik*: those of *Thestarcykia* are about twelve miles distant; *Hlidar-nâmar*, or the mines of *Reykiahlid*, upwards of twenty miles; and *Fremri-nâmar*, which are the most extensive on the island, but can be turned to little advantage, owing to their being situate so far in the interior, at least thirty-six miles distant from the port.

From orders sent to Iceland in the thirteenth century, relating to the management of sulphur, it appears that it has long existed in abundance on the island. Subsequent to the year 1561, repeated privileges have been granted to enterprizing individuals, to encourage its refinement and exportation, both from this port, and the sulphur mines of *Krisuvik* in the south. These latter mines continued to be wrought till the year 1764, but have since been entirely abandoned, though there still exists a sufficient quantity in that quarter, to excite and reward mercantile speculation. Those of *Husavik*, on the other hand, have been more constantly wrought, and in former times have produced a clear profit of from ten to eighteen thousand rix-dollars. During the last forty years, about 220 *cwts.* of refined sulphur

* Olafsen's and Povelsen's Reise, p. 665. Mohr ut sup. p. 311.

have, at an average, been annually exported from this harbour.*

After dinner, I went up to the house of the rector, which, with the church, lies a little to the east of the factory, and delivered a letter I had to him from the bishop. He is a good-looking young man of about thirty-three, and may be classed among the more learned of his order in Iceland. He entered at once into the Bible Society plan; assured me that his parishioners were in the greatest want of the sacred volume, and, with joy, accepted my proposal relative to his taking an active part in the distribution of the copies to be sent to this place. Having drunk coffee with him, he insisted on accompanying me to *Reykiahverf*, whither my servant had proceeded with the horses; and, after drinking chocolate at Mr Baagoe's, I again set off from *Husavik*, in company with the clergyman and Hreppstiori.

When we had gained the heights to the south, I happened to look back on the factory, and was surprised on observing the Danish flag displayed from the house and the vessel lying in the roads—a piece of politeness which I had not in the least anticipated, and to which I could not in any degree conceive myself to be entitled. While it furnished me, however, with an additional proof of the kind disposition of Mr Baagoe, it, at the same time, reminded me of my friends in Denmark, and called forth secret aspirations in behalf of the Bible cause in that kingdom. Retracing the way I had come in the morning for some miles, we then struck off to the left; and, after crossing a tract of superior verdure, covered with fleecy flocks, we arrived about seven in the evening at a farm called *Reykium*, where I found my tent pitched close to the house. As it was my intention to be off early next morning, we went, after a short respite, to survey the boiling fountains in the neighbourhood; but as it began to pour a torrent of rain, we could only just glance at them, and returned immediately to the tent.

* Hist. Eccles. Island. Tom. II. p. 15. Island i det attende Aarhundrede, p. 19.

It continued to rain the whole night, and most of the following day, so that I was under the necessity of waiting for a change of weather. The day was spent in making up my journal, except at two lucid intervals, when, escaping from my confinement, and attended by my servant, and the peasant from the farm, I went to examine the springs; and though their magnificence would bear no comparison with that of the Geysers, I certainly found them extremely interesting, and entitled to the second rank in the history of these remarkable phenomena. They do not lie in *Reykiadal*, as might be supposed from the name given them by Olafsen and Povelsen,* but at the distance of nearly three miles to the east of *Reykiadal*, in a low marshy territory called *Reykiahverf*, close to the base of *Reykiafell*, a low sloping mountain, which, as far as I could perceive for the mist, appeared to be clothed with a coarse kind of grass.

The more remarkable fountains are three in number, and lie nearly in a direct line from north to south. Their names are: *Nordur-hver;* † *Oxa-hver;* and *Sydster-hver*. The first, or northermost spring, is by far the largest, the pipe of which opens into a perfectly circular bason, little inferior to that of the Great Geyser, measuring thirty-four feet and a half in diameter from north to south, and thirty-three from east to west. The pipe itself, which is about ten feet in diameter, is of no great depth, and very irregular, presenting, a few feet below the orifice on the east side, the most beautiful shining incrustations, exactly resembling those of the cavity which forms the remains of the Old Strockr, but still more difficult of access, owing to the breadth of the bason. The sides of the mount exhibit a number of siliceous depositions, but of so extremely delicate a texture, that it was in vain to think of removing any of them in a perfect state. This fountain only jets on the approach of tempestuous weather, and its jets are said to be then both lofty and frequent. During my stay, the water, which was at the

* Reise, p. 640.

† *Hver* properly signifies a large kettle, and is the general name in Iceland for boiling springs or fountains.

boiling point, kept simmering and emitting a large column of steam, for about the space of four minutes, when, a few gentle concussions ensuing, a violent ebullition took place, and the water was raised in the middle of the bason to the height of a foot above the brim, which it immediately overflowed. In less than half a minute, the ebullition began to subside, and the contents of the bason were almost instantly diminished to the same quantity that it displayed while in a more quiet state.

On the south side of the same general mount, and only eight feet distant from the grand bason, is another irregular pipe or opening, which may be called the satellite of this fountain, and at first view appears to be connected with it; but a more narrow inspection of its operations shews, that it proceeds from a separate and independent source. Instead of being quiescent and turbulent by turns, it boils incessantly to a most furious degree, now at the brim and now about a foot below it, and splashes the water some feet around. On measuring its depth, which I could only effect by suspending the line over the middle of a long pole held across it by the men who were with me, I was surprised to find that the ebullitions abated somewhat of their fury, and when I attempted to draw up the line again, after I found it had reached the bottom, it was only by using the utmost exertion that I could effect it—so strongly was the stone which I had fixed to the end of the line attracted by a power communicating with the bottom of the pipe. The power of attraction was greatest while the stone was at rest, and diminished in proportion to its elevation, till it was raised about three feet, when it seemed to have got without the reach of its influence. The depth of the pipe was between fourteen and fifteen feet.

The middle, or *Oxa-hver* the most celebrated of these springs, is situated about a hundred and fifty yards in a south-west direction from the former. According to a traditionary account, still current in the vicinity, it derives its name from the circumstance of an ox having fallen into one of the neighbouring apertures, and after a short interval he

was found thrown up by this; but the thing appears too incredible to admit of the smallest degree of belief: yet, as the most fabulous relations are generally founded on some real occurrence, it is by no means improbable that an ox may have fallen into this identical fountain, and been ejected again by the following eruption. The pipe of the *Oxa-hver* is eight feet at its greatest diameter, and is surrounded by a strongly incrusted brim, almost close to the orifice. It would appear from the earlier published accounts, that it has originally been much wider, and has had a pretty considerable bason; but owing to some deterioration in the mechanism, and the rapid accumulation of its depositions, the mound has made considerable encroachments on the shaft, especially around the mouth. Its shape is oblong, and at the depth of seven or eight feet it appears to diverge towards the west, and becomes quite irregular. The propulsions of the water, which take place every five or six minutes, observe the following order: Immediately after an eruption, it continues to boil quietly about three feet below the orifice, for the space of a minute and a half, after which its ebullitions commence and increase, and the water ascends for about two minutes more, when a denser body of steam makes its escape, and the water, reaching the mouth of the aperture, begins to boil more furiously, and overflows the greater part of the mound. In the course of the following minute, a rumbling noise is heard below, immediately after which the water explodes, and the jets, which are all nearly of the same height, continue to be ejected, with a roaring noise, to the height of between fifteen and twenty feet, for the space of a minute, when the water instantly sinks into the pipe, and resumes its original station. The operations of this spring, during the whole of their progress, are conducted with the utmost regularity, and do not seem to vary half a minute in any of their stages. During the eruption, immensely large rolling volumes of steam burst from the mouth of the pipe, and render the scene more superbly grand and noble.

The incrustations, formed by the deposition of this foun-

tain, are peculiarly beautiful. The greater part of the mound seems covered with small thin pieces of wood, some of them nearly half a foot in length, which lie in almost every possible direction. On breaking them, the most delicate white fibres appear within a light brown rind. The cavities, formed by the junction of the pieces, are generally filled with a fine efflorescence, resembling that of the incrustations at *Laugarvalla*, and various other curious petrifactions.

The *Sydstr*, or most southerly spring, lies two hundred yards to the south of *Oxa-hver*, in a direct line with *Nordur-hver*, and is much smaller than either of them. It consists of three apertures, one of which is always perfectly quiet, though at the boiling point, and is that used for the bending of hoops; the other two, situate at the distance of fifteen feet from one another, regularly alternate, which circumstance compensates for their diminutive size, and renders them scarcely less interesting than the *Oxa-hver*. The largest can only be measured to the depth of five feet, is about half as much in diameter, and jets for about two minutes to the height of six feet, when all remains quiet nearly five minutes; after which the smaller one throws up three curious oblique jets, through three holes in the thin crust with which the pipe is arched. Having acted its part, the water instantly subsides, and in the course of two or three minutes the larger one again commences. This was the only instance of alternation I observed about these springs; though I have since found that Horrobow remarked a regular rotation in all the three. I am sorry I did not then know of the circumstance, alleged by the same author * otherwise I might have made the experiment, viz. that when the water of the largest is put into a bottle, it continues to jet twice or thrice with the fountain, and, if the bottle be corked immediately, it bursts in pieces, on the commencement of the following eruption of the spring!!!

A little to the west of the principal fountains, are three inferior *hvers*, one of which is on the brink, and the other two

* Natural History of Iceland, p. 22.

are in the middle of the streamlet which divides the valley. The first consists of water mixed with red clay, which boils violently, and splashes the mud around the sides of the pit. One of the others, in which, owing to the quantity of cold water conveyed into it by the rivulet, the thermometer did not rise above 182°, is remarkable for the loud reports, and the concussions of the ground, which precede each violent ebullition. When these have ceased, a strong agitation of the water commences, which lasts about three minutes; and, after intermitting double that space, the reports begin as before. The grass on the banks of the rivulet possesses a very superior verdure, to the distance of nearly a mile below the springs, and the forelles, which frequent the water at this height, are uncommonly fat and delicious. The rivulet is called *Helgân*, or the Sacred River, and may have been the scene of superstitious ablutions, previous to the introduction of Christianity. It is still used for bathing by the neighbouring peasants. In the immediate vicinity of the springs is a great quantity of red bolus, which is used for painting houses, and other purposes; and below the bolus is a bed of lava, through the cracks and rents of which the water is conveyed to the springs.

Early on the morning of the 18th, I set off accompanied by the peasant from *Reykium*, and proceeded in a south-westerly direction to *Greniadarstad*, the abode of Dean Scheving, to whom I had a letter of introduction. On descending into the valley, I fell in with a very rugged tract of ancient lava, which has most probably issued from some of the mountains near the mines of *Thestareykia*. It is bounded on the west by the *Laxá*, which I forded opposite to *Greniadarstad*; the water being shallow, owing to the extreme breadth of the river, which at this place is not less than three hundred yards. The Dean is an aged man, has the superintendence of eighteen parishes, and performs the duties of the ministerial office in the parish where he resides. According to the accounts he gave me, the oracles of God are extremely scarce in this part of the island, and he did not suppose there were more than two Bibles in the whole of

his parish. After drinking coffee, and having obtained a promise, that an enquiry should, without delay, be instituted, with the view of ascertaining the actual wants of the people with respect to the Scriptures, I prosecuted my journey towards *Reykiahlid*, the next station on the route to the east country. Crossing a swamp, that stretches towards the right into a valley called *Thcianda-dal*, or the Valley of Silence, which the peasant informed me had formerly been inhabited, but had been depopulated by the plague, I came to the entrance of *Laxârdal*, which is not more than a hundred and fifty yards across, and the bed of the river is rendered still more narrow, by the lava which has here been stopped in its course, and thrown up in every possible form. From the brink of the precipice on the west side, which may be about ninety feet of perpendicular height, you look down upon a number of roaring cataracts, formed by enormous masses of rock that have been dislodged from the side of the mountain, and presenting a most sublime and majestic scene. On the opposite side of the river rises a towering mountain, the face of which exhibits stately columns of rock. The *Laxârdal* opens to the right, completely filled with lava, amongst which the *Laxâ* pursues its irregular course; and on the left, you have an extensive prospect of *Reykiadal*, filled with low conical hills, whose gloom gives a fine effect to the clouds of mist ascending from the waterfalls at your feet. I now descended into the valley, and proceeded about two miles over a broken and extremely uneven tract of lava on the right side of the river, when I again forded it; and, after passing numerous craters and cascades, together with some beautiful islands, on which were people making hay, I climbed up a winding and steep ascent, which conducted me into a desert, called *Myvats-sandar*, consisting entirely of sand, pumice, and other volcanic substances. For upwards of four hours there was not the smallest sign of vegetation to relieve the eye, nor could I meet with a single drop of water to quench my thirst.

Having gained the extremity of the sand, I encountered a prodigious stream of lava, which, having insinuated itself

into the vallies that open into the plain where it has collected, I had to cross several times before I reached the limit of the day's journey. Of all the lavas I had yet seen, this appeared the freshest and most interesting. It is black as jet; the blisters and cracks are of an immense size; and most of the chasms are completely glazed, and present the most beautiful and grotesque stalactitic appearances. In some places it is spread out in large round cakes, the surface of which is covered with round diminutive elevations, resembling the coils in a roll of tobacco. Where the fiery stream has met with some interruption, and got time to cool, a crust has been formed, which, on a fresh vent having been opened below for the egress of the lava, has broken, and, intermingling with the more liquid masses, has been heaved and tossed about in every direction, and now exhibits the wildest and most fantastic figures, which the imagination may easily convert into various objects of nature and art.

This molten stream * is one of those which issued from *Leirhnukr* and *Krabla*, two famous volcanic mountains in the vicinity, between the years 1724 and 1730, and inundated almost the whole of the plain along the northern and eastern shores of the lake *Myvatn*. A little to the left, you descry it descending down the front of an adjoining mountain apparently not more than forty yards in breadth; but, on reaching the low ground, it spreads at once on both sides,

* Few, perhaps, would suppose, that any traces of lava are to be found in the Bible; yet, among the numerous interesting phenomena of nature described in the more ancient documents of that invaluable book, we not only meet with this substance, but, if I mistake not, volcanic mountains, and hot springs, such as exist in great abundance in Iceland. The prophet Nahum declares, in his sublime description of the majesty of God, that "the mountains quake at him, and the hills *melt*, and the earth is *burned* at his presence:—his fury is poured out *like fire*, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Chap. i. 5, 6. And Jeremiah evidently takes his image from a volcano, when he saith, "Behold I am against thee, O *destroying mountain*, saith the Lord, which *destroyest* all the earth, and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a *burnt mountain*. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations, but thou shalt be a desolate for ever, saith the Lord." Chap. li. 25, 26. The passage which contains the most unequivocal reference to an eruption of lava, is that in which Eliphaz in-

encircles the intervening hillocks, winds it way round every small projection of the mountains, and stretches forward to the very margin of the lake. According to the accounts given by those who witnessed the eruption, the stone-flood,

sidiously reminds Job of the catastrophe which unexpectedly seized the abandoned inhabitants of the cities of the plain:

"Hast thou observed the ancient tract,
That was trodden by wicked mortals?
Who were arrested of a sudden,
Whose foundation is a *molten flood*;
Who said to God: Depart from us.
What can Shaddai do to us?"
"Though he had filled their houses with wealth,
(Far from me be the counsel of the wicked!)
The righteous beheld and rejoiced,
The innocent laughed them to scorn;
Surely their substance was carried away,
And their riches devoured by fire."
Chap. xxii. 15—20.

It is, indeed, commonly believed, that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was effected by a shower of fire and brimstone miraculously produced in the regions of the air, and Gen. xix. 24. has been adduced in support of the opinion. But the words: "The Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord, out of heaven," are susceptible of a very different interpretation. It is well known that, in Scripture, every operation of nature is directly ascribed to God. All her diversified instruments are his servants, and what is performed by them is said to be done by himself.

"The winds are his messengers;
His servants, flames of fire."

Earthquakes, storms, inundations, drought, famine, pestilence, and war, are uniformly represented as coming from the Ruler of the universe. When, therefore, the combustible matter in question is declared to proceed from Jehovah, we are, in like manner, to understand the historian as referring the awful catastrophe immediately to God as the avenger of iniquity; though, in bringing it about, he might, as in other instances, have availed himself of natural causes. From the geologic notices contained in the Bible, relative to the neighbourhood of the devoted cities, it would appear, that it abounded with inflammable substances, and, as will presently be shewn, was most probably at some earlier period subjected to volcanic revolutions. Nothing further, then, was necessary, than to set on fire the bitumen, sulphur, &c. that was in the bowels of the earth, which, ravaging with violent fury, an earthquake ensued, and vent being given to the subterraneous elements, a torrent of melted matter was poured forth, that, descending into the plain, carried destruction to its inhabitants, cities, villages,

(Steinâ,) as they very emphatically called it, ran slowly along, carrying every thing before it, and burning with a blue flame, like that which proceeds from sulphur, yet but partially visible, owing to the dense smoke in which it was

fields, and whatever came in its way. The quantities of sulphur, pumice, and ashes, poured by the volcano to an immense height in the air, and falling from that elevation, might, with strict propriety, be said to have been "rained from heaven." In allusion to this catastrophe, God is said to rain on the wicked, hot ashes, fire, and brimstone, Psalm xi. 6. Mr Holm, in his account of the eruption of the Skaptà volcano, says: "The *whole atmosphere* was filled with sand, dust, and *brimstone*, so thick as to occasion a continual darkness. The pumice which fell on the villages, being *red hot*, did considerable damage. Along with the pumice stones, there fell a great quantity of a dirty substance like *pitch*, rolled up sometimes in the form of small balls, and sometimes like rings or garlands. The falling of these *hot substances* was attended with great mischief, as they totally destroyed all manner of vegetation that they came near."

That, besides the fiery sulphureous shower described by Moses, an inundation of lava overtook those cities, is stated in the most express terms, in the passage quoted from Job. Their inhabitants were *arrested* by its torrents. It surrounded their habitations, and cut off all way of escape, *carried by force* their substance, *devoured* their riches with its raging *flames*, and so completely laid waste the spot where they dwelt, that nothing now remained but a *stream of melted matter*. The same fact is obviously implied in the description of the circumstances connected with Lot's escape. Why was he prohibited from lingering in any part of the low land, if not because he would there be exposed to the lava? And what reason can be assigned for his obtaining leave to stop in Zoar; but its lying at some distance from the spot where the lava began to act, as likewise on an elevation whence he could survey the approaching ruin, and retire before the stream reached that place? We accordingly find, that however keen he was on staying there at first, he quitted it before night, for a still more elevated and safer retreat. "And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, for he feared to dwell in Zoar," verse 30. How natural is the incrustation of his wife on the same hypothesis? Remaining in a lower part of the valley, and looking with a wishful eye towards Sodom, she was surrounded, ere she was aware, by the lava, which, rising and swelling, at length reached her, and incrustated her where she stood; so that being, as it were, embalmed by the saline-bituminous mass, she became a conspicuous beacon and admonitory example to future generations. The power of this asphaltic substance in preserving from corruption, is evident, from its being employed by the Egyptians for embalming their mummies. Diod. Sic. Bib. Hist. lib. xix. c. 100. She is said to have been converted into a pillar of *salt*, on account of the quantity of that substance which appeared in the crust, and its abundance in those regions is notorious, both from sacred and profane history: so much so, that the lake which now fills the cavern made by the earthquake, has, among other names, that of the "Salt Sea."

every where enveloped. During the night the whole region appeared to be one blaze; the atmosphere itself seemed to be on fire, and was filled with large balls of fire: flashes of lightning darted along the horizon, and announced to the

In confirmation of the conflagration of the ground about Sodom and Gomorrah, may be alleged Deut. xxix. 22. "All the land *burning* with brimstone and salt; *like the overthrow* of Sodom and Gomorrah," &c. Nor was the fire thus kindled extinguished for ages, but continued to send forth flames, smoke, bitumen, &c. Strabo, lib. xvi. Philo de vita Moses, lib. ii. Joseph. de Bello Jud. lib. iv. c. 8.

Previous to this terrible revolution, the valley abounded with bitumen-pits, Genesis xiv. 10, out of which great quantities of that substance were dug; being applied, by the ancients, in the construction of edifices, Genesis xi. 3, floating vessels, &c. Exodus i. 14. From which circumstance we should naturally have concluded, that it would have obtained the name of the valley of Hémar (from חמר hâmar, to *disturb*, *make turbulent*, expressive of the appearance of the bitumen in its active state,) or the Asphaltic Valley, just as the lake came to receive the appellation of λιμνη Ασφαλτιτιδος; the names of places being most commonly taken from some remarkable object in the vicinity. In Iceland, for instance, we meet with "The Lava Valley;" "The Valley of Smoke," &c. Now, what could possibly be more remarkable than the bitumen, except some volcanic craters, or hot fountains, resembling those in Iceland, by which water, bitumen, sulphur, &c. were continually ejected? On the supposition, that volcanoes, or boiling pools, did exist in the neighbourhood of the valley, a more appropriate name could not have been found, within the whole compass of the Hebrew language, than the valley of Siddim or Sheddim, the name actually given to it in the xivth of Genesis. Not only the root, but every one of its derivatives is expressive of something or other, remarkable in the phenomena of volcanoes. Thus שד, signifies to *shatter*, *destroy*, *lay waste*, and שדד, the reduplicate verb, *to break in pieces*, *destroy utterly*; שד and שוד, *destruction*, *devastation*, all of which are the well-known effects of volcanic eruptions; שיד *lime*, which is obtained by the *destruction of stones by fire*; שדה, to which verb the word in question seems to stand more nearly related, signifies *to gush*, *pour forth*, the most prominent feature of volcanoes, which pour out their melted contents, together with sand, pumice, &c. on the surrounding country. From the same root the divine name *Shaddai* (שדי) is derived, a name peculiarly in use among the po tdiluvian patriarchs, and which appears to have arisen from the *pouring out* of the flood on the old world, and of fire and brimstone on the cities of the plain. Every circumstance therefore considered, the appellation signifies, "The valley of the pourers forth;" or, taking in both senses, "The pourers forth of destruction." Let any one read the history of a volcanic eruption, and then say whether these be not the ideas most forcibly impressed upon his mind.

But I have said that the word may designate hot springs, or fountains, as well as volcanoes. It is, in fact, the same in signification with the Icelandic

inhabitants of distant districts the terrific scenes exhibited in this quarter. Having overflowed the greater part of the low lands, the lava was at length poured into the lake, which it filled to a considerable distance, forming numerous little

Geysers, "The gushers, pourers forth;" and it is certainly a most striking coincidence, that a little to the north-west of Krabla, there is a valley called *Geysadal*, in other words, "The valley of Siddim!" Among the sports which Solomon caused to be made,* were שִׁדּוֹת שִׁדָּה, not musical instruments, as in our common version, but a multiplicity and variety of *jetting fountains*, such as are still common in royal gardens, the most brilliant of which, however, are mere straw-pipes, compared to the natural fountains in Iceland. How the Chaldee paraphrast came to render the words *warm baths*, an interpretation that wonderfully tallies with my hypothesis, I cannot determine, except he had אַשְׁדוֹת and אָשֵׁד in his eye, which are merely the same words under a different form, and are rendered "*Springs*" by our translators, in Deut. iv. 49, "*Springs of Pisgah*;" and Josh. x. 40. xii. 8, "*the Springs*," "*Country of the Springs*." In the other passages where the springs of Pisgah are mentioned, they have given them by a proper name, "*Aphdoth-Pisgah*." The singular occurs only in Num. xxi. 15. and is rendered "*stream*," but the "*spring* of the streams" makes better sense. Now, all these springs lay on the east and north-east margin of the Asphaltic lake, near the *hot springs* of Callirhoë (τοις κατα Καλλιρροην θερμοις), to which Herod went for his recovery, Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. xvii. cap. vi. 5. and were most probably of the same quality.†

Supposing some such phenomena, for it is now impossible to determine which, to have given rise to the name of the valley, it will be no difficult matter to explain what were the idolatrous objects of worship, called שְׁדִים *Shĕddim*, which caught the attention of the Israelites on coming into those parts, and to which they offered their children in sacrifice, Deut. xxxii. 17; and Psalm cvi. 37. They were either some ancient volcanoes, or the effects of such, visible in the ejaculations of hot-water, or bitumen, from large boiling caldrons, which excited the fears and terrors of those who lived in the neighbourhood, and at last became an important branch of Canaanitish idolatry. To appease these offended deities, the terrified votaries sacrificed the offspring of their own bodies, thereby hoping to live secure in future from such dreadful havock and devastation, as they had seen hurled from the mountains in the vicinity of Sodom. It was universally the custom among the northern nations, when they had unfruitful seasons, to sacrifice some person of consequence, in order to procure a good year: their kings themselves were frequently the victims on these occasions. A similar practice is still common in Mexico. Now, if such was the case, merely on a common failure of the seasons, how much more natural was it, when that failure was

* Eccles. ii. 8.

† Many suppose the יְמִים *Yĕmim*, which Anah found in the wilderness, were warm baths, an interpretation derived by St Jerome from the Punic. See Gen. xxxvi. 24.

islands, and destroying the fish with which it was stocked. Those who inhabited the plain, being apprised of the approaching disaster, by the rumbling and cracking noise from the mountain, removed the most valuable of their effects to situations where they were secure from danger; so that little damage was done except the destruction of three farms, with the most of the pasture grounds belonging to them.*

On my arrival at *Reykiahlid*, one of the farm-houses overrun by the fiery stream, but which was afterwards rebuilt nearly on the same spot, my attention was instantly directed to the church, which, in almost a miraculous manner, escaped the general conflagration. Reaching the north-west corner of the low earthen wall by which the church-yard is enclosed, the lava has been arrested in its progress within about two feet of the wall, where, as if inspired with reverence for the consecrated ground, it has divided into two streams, and, pursuing its course till it advanced about twenty yards, when the streams have again united, and left the church

effected by a volcano? Within the whole range of the visible creation, there is undoubtedly nothing more terrible in its appearance, and more dreadful in its effects, than a volcanic eruption.—nothing more calculated to inspire the mind with sentiments of horrific awe, or excite the ignorant to perform acts of superstitious worship and adoration. Witness the effect produced on the inhabitants of Naples, during an eruption of Vesuvius. The head of St Januarius is carried in procession by the Cardinal Archbishop, and placed directly in front of the mountain, amidst thousands of superstitious and trembling spectators. If such a custom has obtained among people called Christians, we may surely conclude, that ignorant idolatry, at a remote period of the world, would go still further, and worship the object of terror.

I shall conclude this long note with an extract from Mr Hooker's Tour in Iceland:—"The Kamtchadales, as well as the Japanese, have a dread of the hot-springs in their country, arising from a similar supposition, that they are the abode of demons. Thus, speaking of the boiling fountains of Opalski, or Oternoi, situated nearly mid-way between the Lopatka and Bolshoiretsk, Martin Sauer observes, that the Kamtchadales suppose them to be the habitations of some demon, and make a trifling offering to appease his wrath; without which, they say, he sends very dangerous storms." See the *Account of an Expedition to the Northern Parts of Russia*, by Commodore BILLINGS, p. 303.

* Olafsen's and Povelsen's Reise, p. 729. Horrebow's Natural History of Iceland, p. 10. For a sublime poetical description of such a scene, see the Iliad, Book xxi. line 342.

completely unhurt in the midst of the surrounding flames. Some parts of the stream, close to the wall, are more than double the height of the church. Who knows but the effectual fervent prayer of some pious individual, or some designs of mercy, may have been the cause fixed in the eternal purpose of Jehovah for the preservation of this edifice?

From this place a prospect presents itself, which, perhaps, of all the views in the world, bears the most striking resemblance to that in the vicinity of the *Dead Sea*.* The *Myvatn*, or Gnat Lake, so called, from its being frequented by immense swarms of that troublesome insect, lies directly before you; and the whole of the intervening tract, which may be about a mile in breadth, is one vast field of black, rugged, and cavernous lava, now projecting a considerable way into the lake, and now giving place to the water: thus forming innumerable creeks and promontories along the greater part of the northern margin. To the north-west rise a number of barren hills that open into the sandy deserts; leaving which, the eye wanders over an extensive tract of moor, intersected, at different distances, by red conical mountains; till, reaching the south side of the lake, it falls in with several huge dark mountains, of various singular forms, that are again relieved in the east by the *Námar*, or

* Strabo, in his Geograph. lib. xvi. speaking of the Dead Sea, says, "It is full of asphaltus, which, at irregular periods, boils up out of the deep, like the ebullitions of hot water, and, assuming a curvated appearance, looks like little hills, emitting a quantity of hot embers, from which an illusive vapour proceeds," &c.——"For there is also a fountain of fire in the middle, producing abundance of bitumen, the irregularity of whose ejections is to be ascribed to the motion of fire, which, like many other substances, observes an order invisible to us. That there exists fire in this region, is evinced by many other signs; by the rugged calcined rocks around Moasada, hollow caverns in many places, slags, pitch distilling from the rocks and hot rivers, the unpleasant smell of which is perceptible at a distance."—In like manner Philo de vita Moses, lib. ii.:—"The memory of that inexpressible disaster (the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah) is still shewn in Syria: ruins, ashes, brimstone, smoke, and thin flames, still breaking forth, intermingled as it were with fire." The barrenness of the surrounding soil became proverbial; and, according to the unanimous testimony of oriental travellers, it wears, to this day, the most sterile and melancholy appearance. See Norberry, Chartwright, and especially Maundrell, Travels, and Volney.

sulphur mountains, from the decomposition going forward in which, a vast profusion of smoke is constantly ascending to a great height in the atmosphere. The most profound and death-like silence pervades the whole of this desolated region. The dismal gloom reflected by the darkness of the opposite mountains on the lake is greatly augmented by the small black islands of lava with which it is studded; and the pillars of vapour proceeding in different places from the surface of the water, though affording a slight contrast, only tend to finish the melancholy scene, by leading the mind to the destructive element, still raging at no great depth in the earth, which has been the tremendous cause of the surrounding wildness and ruin. The lake, which is reckoned to be about forty miles in circumference, has been so filled up with the torrents of lava which have been emptied into it, that, at its extreme depth, it does not exceed four fathoms and an half, and, in most places, is only between two and three fathoms deep. In the lava with which the bottom is covered, are numerous rents and cavities; and, what is remarkable, there are hot fountains in the middle of the lake, boiling to such a degree, that the steam rising from them is seen at a considerable distance. The immediate vicinity of these fountains proves an excellent nursery for the *forelles*, which are found here in great abundance, and much fatter than common. The islands, which have been formed by the heavings and explosion of the sub-aquatic lava, are upwards of thirty in number. Some of them yield a little hay and pasture; and most of them abound in angelica, a plant of which the natives are very fond, and which they collect for winter provision. It has a pleasant taste when fresh, but is said to be still better after it has been kept some time.

As the atmosphere was temperate, I luckily escaped being attacked by the gnats, but observed thousands of them in the window at *Reykiahlid*. They are greyish in colour, have long shining wings, and are much larger than any I had seen before. Not only the peasants, who are continually pestered by them in warm weather, but travellers, who merely pass the lake, declare them to be insupportable.

Their bite is extremely painful; and it is impossible, even after using every means of defence, to keep them from penetrating to the skin. The poor horses, especially black ones, are most tormented by them; and instances have been known, of those belonging to travellers having suffered to such a degree, that, in order to obtain relief, they have rushed with fury into the lake and perished. *

Having pitched my tent close to the margin of the lava, I retired to read a little; but had not proceeded far in that exercise, when my servant announced the arrival of a large travelling cavalcade from the east country; which, on coming out, I found belonged to Kammer-assessor Thorlacius, who had been several years Sysselman of *South Mulè* district, but had lately received the Sysselmanship of *Arness* district, and was now removing his family to the south. It is impossible for a foreigner, who has never been in Iceland, to form any idea of the trouble and danger connected with such a removal. The conveyance of the more important parts of household furniture is entirely out of the question: for they cannot be got overland, and there are no coasting vessels; and it is with the utmost difficulty that the most portable articles can be removed. The fording of the rivers, the climbing of the mountains, the scrambling over the lava, the passage of the morasses, bad weather, and numberless other circumstances, present very serious inconveniences even to the most robust and accustomed traveller, and might be deemed absolutely insurmountable barriers in the way of females and young children; yet Mrs Thorlacius, with her three children, had undertaken a journey of not less than five hundred British miles, and seemed to support it with a courage that quite astonished me. They had each a horse, except the youngest, a girl of about two years, who rode before an assistant. This poor little infant, had the misfortune to be dropped the same morning by her keeper, but did not appear to have received any material injury, only she complained of a pain in her stomach; till, arriving at

* Mohr's Naturhistorie, p. 100.

this place, and being undressed, it was found that the dear babe had broken her thigh-bone. The anguish and perplexity of the parents on this discovery may be easily conceived. At a strange place, with more than the half of their journey before them, and at least sixty miles distant from any surgical aid, their case was truly pitiable. We endeavoured, as well as we could, to set the bone, and bound some pieces of tough sheep-skin parallel with it, to prevent its sliding, all which the child bore with uncommon patience; and, getting it rebound the following morning, they proceeded to *Akur-eyri*, whence they intended sending for proper assistance.

I had become acquainted with Mr Thorlacius in Copenhagen, and knew he would enter cordially into the Bible cause; and I received, on this occasion, the strongest assurances of his assistance and support.

At the distance of twenty-five miles east from *Reykiahlid*, is the large Yökul river, which, taking its rise in the northern regions of the *Klofa* Yökul, and being augmented by an immense number of tributary streams, pours a vast body of water into the *Axarfiord*, a bay on the northern coast, about thirty miles distant from *Husavik*. It frequently overflows its banks, and has repeatedly done great damage to the houses and grounds in the neighbourhood of the sea. As this is the nearest farm on the west side of the river, it is necessary to make an agreement with the peasant for a man and horse to conduct you to the ferry, and row you over, for which he charges three rix-dollars, or about five-and-sixpence Sterling. Not being accustomed to such heavy charges in Iceland, I considered it rather exorbitant, but found ultimately no reason to complain, having got sufficient service for the money.

The morning of the 19th being clear and serene, I resolved to proceed into the desert; and, sending my servant on before me with the baggage, I got the guide to strike off a little to the right, in order to conduct me through the mines. Encountering a cavernous tract of ancient and recent lavas, intermixed and tossed about in the wildest manner, my curiosity was excited by a singular looking hill, about

half a mile before me, from the top and sides of which a considerable quantity of smoke was making its escape, and which wore every appearance of a volcano in miniature. On coming up to it, I found it to consist of lava and volcanic sand. In the middle was a circular crater, of about twenty feet in diameter; which, being open on the south side, I entered, and surveyed various rents in the scorified wall, which emitted so much heat and smoke, that I could scarcely approach within a yard of them. The bottom was filled with sand and rough slags, and the whole bore the most evident marks of its having been a furnace in which the fire has raged, and from which it has played on the surrounding regions. From this place I rode, in a north-east direction, encompassed on every hand by smoking rents and chasms in the lava, till I came to the *Vapour-bath*, a low rude building of lava, raised over an excavation, in which is a crevice that sends forth a current of steam, and heats the place to such a degree, that, on closing the door, a person is instantly thrown into the strongest perspiration. Close to the crevice, Fahrenheit's thermometer rose, in the course of two minutes, to the 144th degree. The bath is frequented by people from a distance, and is celebrated for its efficacy in curing various diseases. It is, however, very inconvenient to bathe here, owing to the quantity of small sooty volcanic sand, which is not only thrown around the bath, but has even penetrated into the inside, through the pieces of lava of which it is constructed.

The sulphureous exhalations now becoming so strong, and the deceitfulness of the surface so great, we were obliged to alight from our horses, and lead them over such parts of the soil as appeared most indurated, though, after we had used every precaution in selecting the road, it frequently happened that one of the horses' feet broke through the crust, and left a hole, which continued to send forth smoke in great abundance, so that every moment we were in danger of sinking into

——— " a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed "

On either side lay vast beds of sulphur, covered with a thin crust, containing innumerable small holes, through which the vapour was making its escape. In many parts the crust, which presented the most beautiful aluminous efflorescence, was not more than half an inch in thickness; and, on its being removed, a thick bed of pure sulphur appeared, through which the steam issued with a hissing noise. The sublimation of the sulphur is produced by the constant ascension of this vapour; and it is found to possess greater and less degrees of purity, in proportion as the soil is more or less porous. In general, however, these mines are vastly superior to any other in Iceland, owing to the intense degree of subterraneous heat, and the very loose and porous nature of the earth at this place.

The sulphur mountain rises to a considerable height from the east side of the hollow in which these mines are situate. It does not exceed a mile in breadth, but is more than five miles in length, stretching from the east end of the lake in a northerly direction, between the volcanoes *Krabla* and *Leirhnuker*, where it joins the ridge by which these two mountains are connected. The surface is very uneven, consisting of immense banks of red bolus and sulphur, the crust of which is variegated with random mixtures of yellow, light blue, and white colours; and, in some places, a soft sandstone makes its appearance through the predominant mould. I could also observe holes, out of which the sulphur has been dug by the peasants, and which seemed to have been made with much prodigality: a consequence that must ever attend its being dug without any regular plan, by persons who do not possess skill sufficient to qualify them for the work. Instead of the mines being wrought under the inspection of an individual appointed for the purpose, the mode of collecting the sulphur is left entirely to the discretion of the peasants; who, in the earlier part of the summer, collect such quantities of it as will afford them a barter against the articles of foreign produce, which they may need for the winter.

Ascending by the sides of the banks, the bolus of which

was very soft, and often took the horses more than mid-leg deep, we succeeded in gaining a narrow pass in the mountain, which opened into a vast level country, but terminated all at once in so abrupt and precipitous a descent, as to excite a momentary trepidation and awe. Yet I had scarcely recovered from my consternation, when a more terrific scene opened on my view. Almost directly below the brink on which I stood, at the depth of more than six hundred feet, lay a row of large caldrons of boiling mud, twelve in number, which were in full and constant action; roaring, splashing, and sending forth immense columns of dense vapour, that, rising and spreading in the atmosphere, in a great measure intercepted the rays of the sun, who stood high above the horizon in the same direction. The boldest strokes of poetic fiction would be utterly inadequate to a literal description of the awful realities of this place; nor can any ideas, formed by the strongest human imagination, reach half the grandeur, or the terrors, of the prospect. I stood for about a quarter of an hour as if I had been petrified, with my eyes intensely fixed on the dreadful operations that were going on in the abyss below me, when, turning to the left, I had a full view of the tremendous *Krabla*, the *Obsidian Mountain*, and two or three other volcanic mountains, whose names I could not learn with any certainty.

Leading our horses down the side of the mountain, in a zig-zag direction, we advanced towards the *hverar*: but, as the steeds grew rather restive, and the soil began to lose its firmness, we left them behind us, and proceeded, with wary step, amongst numerous burning quagmires, till we came close to the springs. Excepting two, which lie at the distance of twenty yards from the rest, they are all crowded together into one vast chasm of the lava. Some of them remain stationary within the crevice, but roar terribly, and emit much steam; others boil violently, and splash their black muddy contents round the orifice of the pit; while two or three jet, at intervals, to the height of four or five feet. The most remarkable, however, is that at the northern extremity of the chasm. Its smallest diameter, down at

the surface of the puddle, may be about fourteen feet, but it opens gradually to the edge, where the chasm is at least twenty feet across. The water, which was quite turbid and black, was comparatively quiet about two minutes, when it broke forth in a most furious manner, jetting to the height of between ten and fifteen feet, and splashing between the jets, in oblique directions, on every side, which rendered it dangerous to stand near the margin. What increased the danger, was the softness of the soil, which appeared to fill other chasms close to the great one, so that, on making a sudden leap, to escape being scalded, a person can hardly avoid plunging into semi-liquid beds of hot clay and sulphur, an alternative still more shocking. The jetting is accompanied with a harsh roar, and the escape of a vast quantity of vapour strongly impregnated with sulphur. It lasts four minutes, after which the liquid again subsides to its former state. The two apertures, that lay at a short distance from the rest, were filled with thick mud, which moved so sluggishly that it could scarcely be said to boil, but, as the surface was considerable, it puffed no small quantity of steam in a very amusing manner. To a considerable distance around these springs, and a long way up the mountain, the soil is extremely soft, and so hot, that you cannot hold your hand more than three inches below the surface; corresponding in every respect to that described by Milton:

——" Till on dry land
He lights, if it were land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire:
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
Of thund'ring Etna, whose combustible
And fuel'd entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublim'd with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole
Of unbless'd feet!"——

Having again reached our horses, we were on the eve of setting off for the road, when, happening to turn towards *Krabla*, I descried a vast volume of smoke, rising at first perpendicularly, with amazing velocity, from a break, about two-thirds up the south-west side of the mountain; but, after gaining a considerable elevation, it struck off in a beautiful horizontal line towards the north-west; and as its regular intermission indicated that it proceeded from a boiling volcano, and I had yet the greatest part of the day before me, I resolved to ascend the mountain, and survey another of these terrible, but interesting scenes. It was with difficulty, however, that I could prevail on my guide to accompany me. The region, he said, was wholly unexplored; and hidden pools of boiling clay were scattered so thick around the foot of the mountain, as to render it inaccessible; but, on offering to make him a trifling present, his fears began to leave him, and he at length engaged to conduct me as far as we could proceed with safety.

The path we pursued, lay along the eastern margin of a stream of lava, which appears to be of the same age with that at *Reykiahlid*, only it is, for the most part, covered with white pumice and volcanic sand. The side of a low mountain, to the right, which we skirted for some time, was partially overgrown with grass, and now and then a few willows reared their dwarfy tops above the ridges of the lava. Passing a desolate farm, and keeping at a distance from the sulphur banks, which appeared in the face of a contiguous mountain, we succeeded in reaching the base of *Krabla*, without meeting with any of the pools so much dreaded by my guide; but here an obstacle presented itself, scarcely less formidable. Along the foot of the mountain ran a small rivulet, by which the ground had been hollowed out to a great depth; and, as there was nothing on either side but loose clay, it was some time before we could find a place, sufficiently indurated, to afford a solid footing for our horses. What increased the difficulty was, that the opposite bank, which is formed by the base of the mountain, was so high and steep, that at almost every step the surface gave way,

and we slid down again into the stream. After several reiterated attempts, we at length gained the summit of the bank, and proceeded upwards, but found the ascent very laborious and toilsome; the side of the mountain consisting of pumice, sand, and soft earth, and for the most part steep and slippery. Walking and riding by turns, in a curvilineal direction, we left several divisions behind us; and, from the apparent nearness of the smoke, and the loudness of the roaring which attended it, both being perceptible at intervals, we flattered ourselves with the hope that the *krer* lay behind the height immediately above us; but on reaching it, we found still another eminence to climb; till having been tantalized in this manner for near an hour, and almost completely out of breath, we ultimately came within sight of the object of attraction. As such, I certainly viewed it at a distance, when nothing was visible but the body of vapour; but the moment my eye took in the whole of the scene, I became conscious of sensations the most repulsive and abhorrent. At the bottom of a deep gulley, lay a circular pool of black liquid matter, at least three hundred feet in circumference, from the middle of which a vast column of the same black liquid was erupted, with a loud thundering noise; but being enveloped in smoke, till within about three feet of the surface of the pool, I could not form any idea of the height to which it rose.

From every circumstance connected with the vast hollow in which this pool is situated, I could not but regard it as the remains of the crater; which, after having vomited immense quantities of volcanic matter, has loosened the adjacent parts of the mountain to such a degree, that they have fallen in, and left nothing but the boiling caldron to mark its site, and perpetuate, in faint adumbrations, the awful terrors of the scene. The surface of the pool may be about seven hundred feet below what appeared to be the highest peak of *Krabla*, and about two hundred feet below the opposite height on which I stood.

Having continued some minutes to disgorge its muddy contents, the violent fury of the spring evidently began to

Sketched by E. H.

Engraved by W. & D. Lizars Edin.

JETTING POOL IN THE CRATER OF KRABLA.

abate; and, as the ground along the west side of the hollow seemed sufficiently solid, I got the guide to accompany me to the immediate precincts of the pool. On the northern margin rose a bank, consisting of red bolus and sulphur, from which, as the wind blew from the same quarter, we had a fine view of the whole. Nearly about the centre of the pool, is the aperture whence the vast body of water, sulphur, and bluish black bolus is thrown up, and which is equal in diameter to the column of water ejected by the *Great Geyser* at its strongest eruptions. The height of the jets varied greatly; rising, on the first propulsions of the liquid, to about twelve feet, and continuing to ascend, as it were, by leaps, till they gained the highest point of elevation, which was upwards of thirty feet, when they again abated much more rapidly than they rose, and after the spouting had ceased, the situation of the aperture was rendered visible only by a gentle ebullition, which distinguished it from the general surface of the pool. During my stay, which was upwards of an hour, the eruptions took place every five minutes, and lasted about two minutes and a half. I was always apprized of the approach of an eruption by a small jetter that broke forth from the same pool, a little to the east of the great one, and was evidently connected with it, as there was a continual bubbling in a direct line between them. None of its jets exceeded twelve feet, and generally they were about five. Another bubbling channel ran a little way to the north-west of the principal opening, but did not terminate in a jetter like the former. While the eruption continued, a number of fine silver waves were thrown round to the sides of the pool, which was lined with a dark blue bolus, left there on the subsidence of the waves. At the foot of the bank on which we stood, were numerous small holes, whence a quantity of steam was unremittingly making its escape with a loud hissing noise; and on the west side of the pool was a gentle declivity, where the water ran out, and was conveyed through a long winding gulley to the foot of the mountain. The soil around the margin was so extremely soft, that it was not without imminent danger I endeavour-

ed to thrust my thermometer into the liquid, in order to ascertain the degree of its heat; an attempt which proved fruitless, as the glass got obscured by the sulphureous exhalations.

The above is an outline of the situation and general appearance of this wonderful pool, but its horrors are absolutely indescribable. To be conceived, they must be seen; and, for my part, I am convinced, that the awful impression they left upon my mind, no length of time will ever be able to erase. The effect was indeed somewhat diminished by the scenes which the earlier part of the morning had presented to my view, and, by comparing this phenomenon with others of the same class, it sensibly lost by the association; whereas, had it been a single and detached object, to which I had never before witnessed any thing similar, it must necessarily have been productive of a higher degree of astonishment. Surely, were it possible for those thoughtless and insensible beings, whose minds seem impervious to every finer feeling, to be suddenly transported to this burning region, and placed within view of the tremendous operations of the vomiting pool, the sight could not but arouse them from their lethargic stupor, and, by superinducing habits of serious reflection, might be attended with the happiest consequences, both to themselves, and all within the sphere of their influence. *

* Olafsen and Povelsen, describing two pools on the south-east side of *Krabla*, say, that they are called *Viite*, a contraction of *Helviite*, which signifies "hell;" and the name is most probably a remnant of "ancient superstition." —"We only reached one of the apertures, which we could discover at a distance, from the dense black smoke arising from it. In appearance, it resembles an exceedingly large kettle. The rim was about five fathoms high above the water, which is bluish, and thick as porridge; and the fine clay, which is thrown up on the banks by the steam, is sour. It is only at certain intervals, when the smoke is carried away by the wind, that a person can look down into the pit. The whole region completely answers to the well-known Solfatara in Italy, of which the inhabitants entertain the same unlovely idea the people here have had, that it is either purgatory or hell. The heathens gave the appellation of *Ollum Vulcani* to the boiling lake at the same place," Pp. 726, 727. That my guide was not altogether free from such apprehensions was evident; for, while the thundering operations of the pool were going on, his attitude, and

On again reaching the elevation where we had left our horses, I stopped a few minutes to survey the surrounding scenery. It was with regret that I did not gain the summit of the mountain, which was not more than five hundred feet above me, but my time imperiously forbade any longer delay. The view from this place was very commanding, but desolate and dreary in the extreme. What was visible of *Krabla*, appeared covered with the same clay, pumice, and sand, as that on which I stood; only diversified by beds of yellow sulphur, and a few strangely mis-shapen rocks, which now and then broke through the surface. On the left rose the *Obsidian* mountain, consisting of a high narrow ridge, that runs from north to south. This was relieved by a low flat circular mountain, over which I could descry part of the vast inhospitable desert stretching into the interior, till terminated by the huge volcano called *Herdubreid*, and the *Odâda Hraun*, which is reported to be one of the most extensive and forbidding tracts of melted rock that is to be met with in Iceland. To the west of this wilderness lay a number of low mountains, where the *Fremrinâmar* are situated. Directly in front was the valley filled with lava above described; near the farther end of which the large columns of smoke, ascending from the sulphur springs, had a fine effect. Beyond this rose the mountains to the south of *Myvatn*, called *Sellingafiall*, *Blâfiall*, and *Burfell*. To the west were *Reykiahlidarfiall*, and *Geysadalsfiall*; between which and *Krabla* lay the dangerous volcano of *Leirhnukr*. It appeared considerably below me, at the distance of a mile. The crater was surrounded by a vast tract of black lava, which is said to be inaccessible, owing to the softness of the ground; and the side of the mountain that lay nearest to me was covered with beds of bolus and sulphur.

Quitting this scene, and bending our course round the precipitous brow of a hill, on the south side of *Krabla*, which was so deeply indented by the mountain torrent, and

the contortions of his features, were scarcely less terrific than the pool it self. I was the more struck at this, as he seemed to regard the scenes we had witnessed in the morning with perfect indifference.

afforded so insecure a footing, that it was with great difficulty we turned it, we came, in the course of an hour, to *Hrafntinnufiall*, or the *Obsidian* mountain, so called from its abounding in obsidian or the Icelandic agate. * On the west side of this mountain is a large hollow or plain, in which are a number of knolls, for the most part pointed at the summit, that consist entirely of this beautiful mineral. From the undulations apparent in the space between these eminences, I concluded that it has been overrun by a stream of obsidian, and that the knolls have been heaved up in a manner analogous to that in which those of common lavas are formed. My attention was first attracted by a vein that appeared at some distance up the mountain, but on reaching it I was disappointed to find that it was very coarse in the grain, not differing much from ordinary lava, only it was unvesicular. Returning by another path, amidst innumerable small fragments of lava, obsidian, and five-sided basalts, I ascended one of the knolls, which, being broken on one of the sides, exhibited the most perfectly black obsidian. With the utmost ease I separated pieces from the rock much larger than I could possibly move. Having picked out such specimens as were most conveniently carried, and just glanced at the large shining beds near the top of the mountain, I again mounted my horse, and made the best of my way to a pass at the northern extremity, through which I hoped to extricate myself from these dismal volcanic regions. Just before coming to the pass, we rode close by a large pool of light blue water, where, it would appear, from the depositions round the margin, a boiling spring has played in former times; and, directly in front, appeared a long rugged ridge of black stratified rocks, running along the north-east side of *Krabla*, which I take to be the aqua-igneous volcano described by Olafsen and Povelsen, as the oldest of all the mountains in the vicinity of *Myvatn*. †

* This stone, which is found in Peru and Quito, the Spaniards also call Piedra de Galinazzo, or "Raven Stone," which is the signification of the Icelandic *Hrafntinna*.

† Reise igiennem Island. p. 727.

The descent from the pass was extremely declivitous, and could only be accomplished by leading the horses in a zig-zag direction. Having reached the foot of the mountain, we hastened to quench our thirst at a black stream, which we saw a little way before us, and which proved exceedingly refreshing, both to ourselves and the horses; neither of us having tasted a drop since early in the morning. All around the tract we explored, the water is of a light blue colour, and so strongly impregnated with sulphur that it cannot be drunk. We now rode across a number of stony fields, and in the course of an hour arrived at the road, which led us in the next hour to a vast plain, overrun with lava at some remote period, and exhibiting, in many places, immense yawning caverns; in others, a surface of many hundred feet square, as level as pavement. This tract was relieved by one consisting of cinders and ashes, which have proceeded from a volcano a little to the right hand of the road. This volcano is of no great height, stands insulated, is circular, and hollow within, having a lateral opening towards the east; and, from its resemblance to an old fortification, and its having been used for driving horses into, in order to catch them, it has obtained the name of *Hrossa-borg*. In this situation, to whatever side the traveller turns, nothing presents itself to his view, but

> "A dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
> The seat of desolation."

The past part of the day had been spent in gratifying a curiosity of exploring some of the more awful scenes of nature: the remaining part was to witness a complication of anxieties and adverse occurrences. On his arrival at the *Yökul River*, my servant had unloaded the horses, and suffered them to go loose among a number of sand hills, overgrown with wild corn; but, as they had no appetite, hungry as they were, for so coarse a vegetable, and there being no grass in the vicinity, they had quitted the bank of the river, and were in full march for *Reykiahlid*, where they had fed the preceding night. We happily met them before they had

got farther than a mile, and driving them back to the ferry, we found the baggage, but there was no appearance of the servant. He had taken a circuitous route in search of the horses, and might have gone far enough, if the lad had not rode back into the desert and found him. During their absence I took care of the horses, and cast many a wishful look towards the opposite bank of the river, in some measure intimidated by the breadth and impetuosity of the stream that was flowing between, and fully assenting to what I had heard reported, that it was the largest and most dangerous of all the rivers in the north of Iceland. On their return, we re-loaded the horses, and with some difficulty forded about one-third of the river; when, reaching a low sand-bank, my servant and I unloaded the horses again, while the lad, wading the fording-place, went to bring round the boat, which, being filled with baggage, the servant entered, in order to receive the horses on their swimming across. It was no agreeable sight to behold the lad fighting against a current of eight miles an hour; to which, however, he was ultimately obliged to give way, and only barely gained the opposite shore considerably below where I stood. After resting a little, he returned with the boat and assisted me in driving the horses into the stream; and all promised well till they got a little past the middle, when a strong turn of the current drove them round, swept them away past the north-end of the sand-bank, and, carrying them back towards the side they had left, they made for it, and, ascending the bank, set off again at full speed into the desert. Fortunately the horse belonging to the guide was fastened to a stone, so that he could not accompany the rest; and, re-fording the western branch of the river, the lad set out in quest of the horses, while I remained beside the boat and the rest of my baggage. As he was not like to make his appearance after some time had elapsed, I began to feel somewhat uneasy. On the opposite side was my servant, who could render me no manner of assistance, nor could he even hear me, owing to the breadth and roaring of the intervening stream. I was myself placed on a small bank, the highest

part of which was not more than a foot above the surface of the water: it began to get dark: the rain poured down in torrents, and the river was on the increase, from the quantity which had fallen in the course of the day. It is true, I had the small cockle-shell of a boat beside me; but to think of managing it against so impetuous a current, was altogether out of the question. Apprehensive, therefore, of danger, and conceiving that the lad might not be able to get the horses back alone, I at last resolved to wade over to his assistance. I chose, as nearly as I could, the place we had forded, which, owing to a gentle declivity, was more shallow than any other; but had nearly paid dear for my temerity, as the water stood almost to my middle, and twice or thrice I felt myself borne a little down, and must inevitably have been carried away, had not the stones at the bottom held my feet, while I inclined with all my strength against the current, till, after a few violent efforts, I succeeded, by the kind providence of God, in reaching the dry land.

Having returned thanks to my Almighty Deliverer for this fresh instance of his mercy, and emptied my boots of the water that had got into them, I bent my course into the desert; and, after walking about a mile, to my no small joy, met the lad with the horses. We now made again for the sand-bank, and driving them into the river, somewhat higher up, they at length gained the opposite bank, near the place where my servant was waiting; and, while the lad plied at the oar, I had the disagreeable task assigned me of holding the reins of one of the horses, while swimming, which we could not venture with the rest; and which threatened, at times, to overturn the boat with his head. In a minute or two, we were far below the sand-bank; and, had it not been for my confidence in Divine protection, I must have viewed myself as swept along to a watery grave; but, "He that had delivered, did again deliver," and brought me in safety to the wished-for bank.

It had now become so dark, that we could scarcely see to reload the horses; and yet we had six miles of a desert country to explore alone, the guide from *Reykiahlid* quitting us

at this place. At first we could discover the track from the greater darkness of the sand, but we had not advanced two miles ere it became wholly invisible; and, after alighting from our horses, and feeling in vain with our hands, we were obliged to commit ourselves to God, and the instinct of one of our horses, as his instrument during the remainder of the way. I had often heard of surprising feats being accomplished by the Icelandic horses; yet they had more the appearance of the tales of other years than that of sober facts. In my present circumstances, an opportunity presented itself of bringing them to the test of experience. Suffering the steeds to go loose, and placing the oldest first, we were conducted, without a single accident, over heights and hollows, till, all at once, we were stopped in our progress by a steep elevation, the nature of which, with all our groping, we could not possibly ascertain. At last, after crossing and recrossing it several times, my servant explained the mystery, by exclaiming, "Ho! here is a window!"* so that, after having rode four miles across an unknown desert, in a night of extreme darkness, we had the great satisfaction to find we had arrived at *Grimstad*, the appointed limit of our journey for that day.

As it was past twelve o'clock, the family were sunk in the most profound sleep; yet, on being called up, they arose with the greatest alacrity; and I had scarcely got time to hang up a lamp they had the kindness to lend me, when the landlady and one of her daughters made their appearance in the tent, with a large bason of hot milk, bidding me repeatedly welcome, and tenderly sympathizing with me in my perplexities and troubles. With heartfelt gratitude I prostrated myself before the God of my life; praised him for the numberless mercies of the day; and, commending myself, during the remainder of my journey, to his blessing, I laid

* On relating this anecdote to one of the most respectable public officers in *Reykiavik*, he informed me that, one dark night he was in like manner puzzled by a height that fell in his way; but applying the whip to his horse, he obliged him to mount it, and did not discover his situation till one of the fore-feet of the animal sunk into a hole, which, on stepping off, he found to be the chimney of a house!

Sketched by Capt.n Friend.

Engraved by R. Scott Edin.r

myself down to rest, in a happier state of mind than I recollected having done for years.

My tent and baggage having been completely soaked with the rain, and the horses tired with the fatigues of the preceding evening, I resolved to spend the following day at this place. On the clearing away of the mist, an extensive view of the surrounding country presented itself; but, with the exception of some small huts and grass-lands belonging to the farm, the eye wandered in vain in search of houses, or the least appearance of vegetation. The whole formed one vast desert, the gloomy uniformity of which was barely relieved by some snow and ice mountains, and a number of fantastically shaped volcanoes, that crowded into the scene, in almost every direction. Of these, the most remarkable was *Herdubreid*, or the Broad-Shouldered Volcano, so called from the shape of the crater, which is distinctly visible from this place. This mountain forms the meridian day-mark of the *Grimstad* family. Few of the Icelanders being in possession of watches, the only sun-dial they make use of is the natural horizon, which they divide into eight equal points, called day-marks (*dagsmaurk*), availing themselves of certain peaks or projections of the mountains; or, in the absence of these, they erect pyramids of stones on the corresponding heights. Most of these kinds of pyramids have originally been raised by the first settlers from Norway, and have been held in repair from generation to generation; which circumstance will account for the difference of time between the Icelandic computation, and that in common use with us. Their divisions are as follows:

1. *Midnætti*, i. e.	Midnight,	about	11	o'clock,	P. M.
2. *Otta*,	Morning Vigil,	—	2	—	A. M.
3. *Midur-morgun* or *Hirdis-rismál*	Mid-morning, or Shepherd's rising hour,	—	5	—	—
4. *Dagmál*,	Day,	—	8	—	—
5. *Hádegi*,	High-day, or Noon,	—	11	—	—
6. *Nón*,	Noon,	—	2	—	P. M.
7. *Midur-aptan*,	Mid-evening,	—	5	—	—
8. *Nattmál*	Night,	—	8	—	—

In the vicinity of the factories, the marks approximate more to our hours; the natives finding it convenient to accommodate themselves, in this respect, to the usage of foreigners. In the names they give to the days of the week, the Icelanders pretty much resemble the Society of Friends; only they do not make use of the numerals throughout. With us, they call the first day of the week *Sunnudagr*, Sunday; and the second *Mânadagr*, Monday; but Tuesday they express by *Thridiudagr*, the third day; Wednesday is *Midvikudagr*, the same as the German *Mittwoche*, mid-week-day; Thursday is called *Fimtudagr*, the fifth day; Friday, *Föstudagr*, the fast-day; and Saturday, *Laugardagr*, the bathing-day, it being universally the custom of the Scandinavians to frequent the bath on that day.—But to return to *Grimstad*.

The family, fifteen in number, were all busy at hay-making, close to my tent. The farm is held by a widow, who is assisted in the management of it by the brother of the departed, an aged man of about seventy. She has three sons, and seven daughters, all in the bloom and sprightliness of youth. Some were employed in tedding; others were removing the cocks already dry, and carrying them to the stack; while two lads were preparing sods for a defence against the rigour of winter.

> "Even stooping age is here; and infant hands
> Trail the long rake, or, with the fragrant load
> O'ercharged, amid the kind oppression roll."

I could not help admiring the cheerfulness and content which shone in every countenance; and I was more than ever convinced of the truth, that happiness is confined to no station, and that the fewer our real wants are, the greater is our enjoyment of life, undisturbed by the long train of cares and anxieties which harass and perplex the votaries of artificial luxury. Uncontaminated by intercourse with polished life, the inhabitants of this obscure farm preserve all the original simplicity of natural habits; and, ignorant of the cunning

and deceit, the perfidy and intrigue, which too often pervade more populous societies, they are unsuspecting, liberal, and kind, in the highest degree. They live at the distance of thirty miles from any neighbouring habitation; so that they are strangers to the petty feuds and quarrels of vicinage; and, mustering so strong a force at home, they stand in no need of foreign assistance. Their principal earthly care is the safety and provision of their flocks and herds, on which both their clothing and food depends, as well as the barter of the summer market. To no situation, therefore, could the sage advice of Solomon more aptly apply: "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds; for riches are not forever, nor doth the crown endure to every generation. The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of thy field. And thou shalt have goats milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance of thy maidens." Proverbs xxvii. 23—27. Their distance from any place of worship is so great, that they can only attend twice in the year, in order to receive the sacrament; and even then they do not repair to the parish church, but to a *Bænahus*, or house of prayer, situated at a considerable distance in the desert, where two other solitary families meet with the clergyman for the above-mentioned purpose. They, nevertheless, discover a superior degree of religious information, which is to be ascribed to their being in possession of a copy of the Scriptures, and a number of other good books, which they read every Sabbath in summer, and during a considerable portion of the long evenings in winter.

In the course of my evening walk I fell in with the crowded pen, in which were two girls, employed in milking the sheep. Observing that they were upwards of fifty in number, and that such as had been milked were soon lost among those that were unmilked, I asked how it was possible for them to distinguish the sheep with so much ease? "O," said they, "we know them all by name;" a reply which at

once brought to my recollection, and illustrated that endearing part of the character of the Lord Jesus, "that Great Shepherd of the sheep;"—"and he calleth his own sheep by name." John x. 3.

Leaving *Grimstad* about ten o'clock in the forenoon of the 21st, we soon lost sight of vegetation, and again encountered a desert of stones and sand. In many places there was not the faintest impression of a track. The rocks and stones, which exhibited numerous proofs of their having been exposed to the action both of fire and water, lay thrown about in the strangest confusion, and the whole scene re-echoed to Isaiah, xxxiv. 11; "And he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness;"* or Job xxx. 3. "a wilderness desolate and waste."† I compared my situation to that of David, while in the wilderness of Judah. Like him, I was, both in a temporal and spiritual point of view, "in a dry and thirsty land, in which there was no water;" and, though I read and meditated on the Scriptures alternately, still my heart accorded with his, in longing to enjoy renewed manifestations of the Divine power and glory in the sanctuary.

The day being hot, we were parched with thirst; but it was not till we had been repeatedly deceived by the appearance of vallies and brooks, that, about five o'clock in the afternoon, we came to a small river, where, as there was a little vegetation on its eastern bank, we stopped about half an hour to refresh the horses. Resuming our course, we came, in a short time, to a precipitous descent, which extricated us from the wildness of bleak and desolate mountains, and introduced us into a level country, where there

* To the mere English reader, the beauty and force of this admirable passage are entirely lost. In the Hebrew there is an evident allusion to Genesis i. 2. where, in the first stage of its creation, this globe is said to have been תהו ובהו *tohu vabohu*, "confusion and emptiness." Therefore, to stretch out upon any place the measuring-line of תהו *tohu*, and the plummets of בהו *bohu*, was to reduce it to a state of emptiness and confusion, similar to that of the original chaotic mass.

† Heb. שואה ומשאה *shoah umshoah*.

was a good deal of coarse grass, and being studded, in various places, with sheep, it presented a very agreeable relief to the eye. In the course of two hours more, we reached a mountain, which seemed to have been terribly revolutionized by water, the most enormous masses of compact stone being scattered all round its base. Skirting the east side of this mountain, and descending into a fertile valley, we arrived at a farm called *Haukstad*, where I pitched my tent; it being impossible to reach *Hof* in *Vopnafiord*, the place of my destination, that evening.

A little to the east of *Grimstad* is the division between the *Nordlendinga-fiordungr*, and *Austfirdinga-fiordungr*, or the northern and eastern quarters of the island. Here also *Mulè* Syssel begins, which was formerly divided into three parts, the north, middle, and south divisions, each of which had its own Sysselmand; but the inequality of the division was attended with several inconveniences; and, in the year 1779, the Syssel was divided into two equal parts, and placed under the direction of two Sysselmen, who divide the labour of collecting the taxes imposed on the whole Syssel. *

Next morning I proceeded in a south-easterly direction; and, crossing the east end of the mountain opposite to *Haukstad*, I descended into *Hofsâdal*, across a number of dangerous bogs, having a stupendous precipice of columnar rocks on my right, till I reached the river, whose northern bank I skirted for some time; and, about one o'clock, arrived at *Hof*, the residence of the very Reverend A. Thorsteinson, Dean of North *Mulè* Syssel. It is situated on an elevation, and commands a noble and extensive prospect. To the right, a long valley stretches into the interior, where it is bounded by very high mountains, covered with snow. In front, are the lofty mountains of *Smörvatn* and *Krossavik*; and to the left is the bay of *Vopnafiord*, on the north side of which lies the trading station of the same name. *Hof* is famous for its having been the seat of a heathen temple, whence the name is still retained; and the door of the church,

* Olavii Oeconomisk Reise, p. 429.

which is certainly very old, is reported, by a tradition that may be traced upwards of four hundred years back, to be the identical door of the temple. Though the dwelling-house bears no proportion, at present, to that erected at this place by Broddi Thorisson, at an early period of Icelandic history, * it is more capacious than any Icelandic house I have seen; and the room into which I was shewn on my arrival, is equal to any in the best mercantile houses. The Dean is a tall, well-looking man, of about forty, easy and polite in his manners, and possesses a degree of intelligence and piety greatly superior to any I had yet met with on the island. Having read the letters of introduction which I delivered to him, he expressed, in the liveliest terms, the interest he felt in the circulation of the Sacred Oracles; his joy at the provision that had been made for Iceland; and his gratitude to God, whose kind providence had paved the way for the bestowment of this blessing upon her. Several years ago he had received, for distribution, two hundred copies of the New Testament, published in 1807, but they only went a little way in supplying the want; and he verily believed that, in the course of a few months, he could dispose of as many thousand copies in his Deanery. The desire of reading the Scriptures, he was happy to say, was universal; but hitherto the means of gratifying it were very circumscribed, owing to the scarcity of Bibles in this quarter of the island. The parish of Hof contains upwards of four hundred souls; yet there is only one parishioner, upwards of eight years of age, that cannot read, and this individual is prevented by a natural infirmity.

The longer I was in company with the Dean, and the wider scope we gave to the conversation, the more did we coalesce; and, like the disciples of old, "our hearts burned within us," while we talked of the wisdom and goodness displayed in the plan of the divine government; the love of the Son of God, in voluntarily becoming our substitute; the

* Hann var thâ hâlfthritugr födmum, oc threttan álna breidr, oc threttan álna hâr. "It was then twenty-five fathoms in length, thirteen ells in breadth, and thirteen in height." Landnamabok. p. 303.

claims he has on our love and obedience, in consequence of that substitution; the excellence of his Gospel, and the pleasing prospects of the extension of his moral dominion, which are at present opened to the view of the church. Prevented, by his situation, from obtaining any information relative to the state of religion in other parts of the world, the accounts I had it in my power to communicate, were as "cold waters to a thirsty soul." The establishment of Bible Societies, in particular, he could not but regard with a kind of reverence, mingled with the most joyful admiration. In the course of the evening, we fixed the mode of supply for the northern division of *Mulè* Syssel; the Dean engaging to institute an immediate inquiry relative to the number of the poor, whose circumstances required that copies be given them gratis; as also, how many wish to purchase copies, either of the Bible or New Testament; and, on completing the investigation, to write to Copenhagen, by one of the autumn ships, for the quantity needed within his charge. His lady also, together with her sister, the widow of the Sysselman, who died lately in *Leith*, discovered superior intellectual attainments, and read with avidity the Danish account of the operations of the Bible Society, which I had given to the Dean.

Having made every necessary arrangement at this place, there was no occasion for my proceeding on to the factory of *Vopnafiord*. Its situation being central, renders it very convenient for the inhabitants of the northern part of the Syssel; yet the harbour is greatly inferior to some others, at no great distance, on the coast. The mountains behind *Vopnafiord* are very high; and one of them, in particular, is remarkable for its exhibition of surturbrand, in combination with basaltine pillars.

CHAP. V.

Journey through Mulè Syssels—Icelandic Psalm-book—Bridge and Basket—Punishment for neglect of Education—Eskifiord—Holmar—Bewildered on Stapsheidè—Mountains of Breiddal—Visit Eydal—Berufiord—Factory of Diupavog—Circulating Libraries—Rich Minerals—Hammarsfiord—Starmyra—Lonsheidi—Stafafell—Vökulsâ i Lon.

On the 23d of August, about noon, I bade adieu to the kind and interesting family at Hof, and set off on the road to *Eskifiord*, accompanied by the Dean, who conducted me across the *Hofsâ* and *Sunnudalsâ*, two considerable rivers, which are, for the most part, supplied from the snow-mountains, and join a little below this place. Having skirted the south bank of the *Sunnudalsâ* for some time, and passed a magnificent cataract, the path turned off to the left, and leading us across a soft swampy tract, brought us to a very steep and winding ascent, on the east side of the *Fossâ*, or Cataract River. We were here obliged to dismount, and lead our horses up the mountain. As we ascended, I was every moment charmed with the finest cascades, down which a great quantity of water was poured with resistless fury, and, what tended to heighten their grandeur, was the immense depth at which they lay; the pools by which the most of them were received being upwards of a hundred feet below the brink of the gully along which we passed. In many places the road approached so close to the margin, that there was great danger of the horses missing a foot, and sliding into the abyss.

In the course of two hours we gained the summit of the ascent, and entered on a long dreary mountain-tract, called

Smörvatsheidè, which presented nothing worthy of notice, except now and then a collection of water, and large masses of snow, and a stream of lava, which, lying so high, and being surrounded by so many irregular hills, must have issued from some volcano in the immediate vicinity of the *Heidè*. As the mist was pretty close, and it rained heavily, the ride proved very uncomfortable. About seven o'clock, we reached the south end of the *Heidè*, from which we had to descend along the side of a precipice, still more steep than that at the north end; and, on reaching the foot, we soon found ourselves surrounded by bogs, which stretched a considerable way south. Continuing still to descend through alternate tracts of stones and morass, we arrived, a little before twilight, at a rich farm called *Fossvöllum*, or the Cataract Plains, from the noble cataract close behind the houses. Independent of the contrast formed by the dreariness of the *Heidè*, the landscape at this place presented one of the most beautiful rural scenes I had met with on my journey. The troubled waters dashing over a precipice of rugged rocks, both sides of which are lined with verdant meads; the gentle elevations which encircle the plains; the stately appearance of the farm; the extent and verdure of the *tûn*, and the number of sheep, cows, and horses, that were feeding in every direction, produced altogether an effect the most lively and pleasing. I pitched my tent at the margin of the river, about half a stone-cast from the cataract, and was soon lulled asleep by the sounds of the struggling stream.

It being late ere the mowers quitted the scythe, I did not see the proprietor (Rusticus Biörnson,) till early the following morning, when he paid me a visit in my tent, and told me he was quite angry with me for not having slept in the house. He possesses a copy of Gudbrand's Bible, together with two copies of the New Testament, published 1807; yet he gave me a commission for a Bible and four New Testaments, which he intended giving as presents to some poor people in his service. Of the new Psalm-book he complained sadly, but the principal argument he used against it was, that "he was an old man, and was fond of old things."

For upwards of two hundred years, the only Psalm-book used in the Icelandic church was that known by the name of *Grallaramm*, which first appeared in 4to, in the year 1594, and which, besides a number of antiquated and vulgar expressions, contained passages that were unintelligibly mystical, and others, containing sentiments which must necessarily have offended the ears of such as were accustomed to reflection, and the habitual study of the Scriptures. With a view to the removal of this evil, orders were given, in the year 1784, to the two Bishops, to prepare a better collection; and, about ten years afterwards, on the institution of the Royal Icelandic Society for the advancement of knowledge in the country, the completion of the work was committed to that Society under the direction of the learned Bishop of *Skalholt*. This prelate not only desired such as had attained to some degree of celebrity for poetical talent, but also all who felt so disposed, to send to the Society such psalms, either originals or translations, as they might deem worthy of insertion; and after the Bishop's death, the revision and selection of the psalms came into the hands of Bishop Vidalin, and Chief Justice Stephensen, and a new psalm-book was published at *Leirârgördum*, 1801, and introduced into the church service, agreeably to an order of the Danish Chancery. On its first appearance, it met with considerable opposition, not only from the peasants, but also from several of the clergy; and there are many parishes in which it has not been received to this day. *

Indeed, when it is considered, that in modernising the old psalms, they have not merely been purged from obsolete and offensive words, but that the passages celebrating the divinity of the Son of God; the value and all-sufficiency of his atonement; the influences of the Holy Spirit, &c. have either been omitted, or altered so as to give a very cold and partial view of these doctrines, it cannot be matter of surprise with those who adhere to "the faith once delivered to

* See Preface, and Chief Justice Stephensen's "Iceland in the eighteenth century," p. 253.

the saints," to find that such of the Icelanders as are in the habit of bringing all things in religion to the test of Scripture, prefer the old psalm-book, with all its faults, to one in a high degree favourable to the tenets of Socinianism. An instance is mentioned by Mr Hooker, * but I believe it is a solitary one, of *Pope's Universal Prayer* being introduced into the psalmody of an Icelandic church; from which he argues the liberality of sentiment entertained by the party concerned in its introduction. It must be allowed, the combination of "*Jehovah*, *Jupiter*, and *Drottinn*," in an act of professedly Christian worship, was liberality with a witness! Its counterpart is only to be found in the annals of atheism, during the awful period of the Revolution at Paris; and gives us occasion to repeat the apostolic inquiry: "What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Corinth. vi. 15, 16.

Having crossed the bogs and a low hill to the south of *Fossvöllum*, I came in a short time to *Yökulsâ-â-Brû*, another of those mighty rivers which this island pours into the ocean. When the reader is informed that, previous to its reaching this place, it receives an accession of no less than thirty-eight rivers and streamlets, he will be able to form some idea of its size and strength. It is here confined between two perpendicular precipices of solid rock, measuring fifty-two feet across, and sixty-eight from the brink of the rocks to the bottom. The depth of the water is various, depending on the rains and the melting of the snow; and sometimes its banks are entirely overflowed, as in 1625, when the water rose forty feet above them. At the time I passed, there appeared to be about thirty feet to the surface of the water. Over this channel, a slender wooden bridge is thrown, about five feet in breadth, with ledges, consisting of a few poles which are raised from the beams on either side, and bound together at five different places above, which gives them the appearance of as many doors. Alighting from my

* Journal of a Tour in Iceland, vol. i. p. 270.

horse, I went to the bridge, and after having looked for a minute or two into the profound chasm, through which the light brown torrent rolled and boiled with the most tremendous fury, I took hold of the ledges, and shook the bridge with the utmost ease. Indeed, its instability is such, that I have no manner of doubt but a person of powerful muscle could shake the whole structure to pieces in less than a quarter of an hour. I now walked over, not without impressions of terror, and returning, led my horse over the tottering frame; when my servant and one of the peasant's sons carried over the baggage, and then led the horses one by one, till all was safe on the opposite side.

Some miles farther up, there is another mode of crossing this river, called by the natives *at fara á Klâfa*, but it is still more terrific. Two ropes are suspended from the edge of the precipice on either side, on which a basket or wooden box is hung, sufficiently large to contain a man and an ordinary horse-burthen. Into this box the traveller must descend, and pull himself, by means of a rope, over the yawning abyss; while, owing to the looseness of the main ropes, the box sinks with rapidity till it reaches the middle, and threatens by the sudden stop it there makes, to dislodge its contents into the flood. The principal danger, however, attends the passage of the horses. They are driven into the river a little higher up, and if they do not swim to a certain point formed by a projection of the rock, they are precipitated over a dreadful cataract, and seen no more. If measures be not soon taken to repair the bridge, which is beginning to rot at the south end, the *Klâfa*, dangerous as it is, will be the only means of conveyance over the Yökul river.

We had not got many yards from the bridge, when one of the baggage-horses had nearly disappeared in a dangerous bog; and, after a few vain struggles to extricate himself, he began quite coolly to eat the grass within his reach. Having pulled him out, we proceeded over a long marshy tract called *Brúarheidi*, which terminates to the left in the parish of *Tunga*, and is diversified by several lakes, where

a considerable number of swans are caught while they are casting their feathers. About five in the afternoon, we arrived at the northern margin of the *Lagarfliot*, which was covered with fragments of zeolites, crystals, and other minerals; the water itself was white, and being little short of a mile in breadth, had more the appearance of a lake than a river. Skirting the *Fliot*, till we came to a farm called *Aas*, we were ferried across, the horses being held from the stern of the boat; and, after proceeding about six miles up the south side, we came to *Finnstad*, where I pitched my tent for the night.

The whole of the tract on both sides of the *Lagarfliot* is closely inhabited, and is considered to be one of the best districts in Iceland. It goes by the general name of the *Herred*, and contains ten parishes. The pasturage is uncommonly rich, the meadows extensive, the mountains abound in *Fiallagrös*, or lichen Islandicus, which the inhabitants collect during the summer, and lay up in store for winter-provisions; and the numerous forests of birch that grow here, yield them many conveniences, of which other districts are entirely destitute. Add to which, the fine fishery on the *Lagarfliot*, as well as the ease with which they can row out to the salt-water fishery, and it will appear, that the praises which have been lavished upon it, have not been altogether without foundation. At the upper end of the *Fliot*, in the tract called *Fliotsdal*, lies *Skrida Priory*, which was founded by Bishop Stephen, about the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The 25th, being rainy, I was confined the most of the day to my tent. At first I indulged the hope of being able to turn my detention to some advantage, by mixing with the family, and obtaining a closer view of the native manners and customs; but, to my no small disappointment, I soon found, that the character they exhibited was in perfect contrast with any I had hitherto observed in Iceland, and that if I were to form a judgment of its inhabitants in general, from the specimen I now had before me, the sentence I should pronounce upon them would not be more unfavour-

able than unjust. Sloth, swearing, and slander, appeared to be their predominant habits. Happening to mention these circumstances afterwards to a person who knew the family, he sincerely regretted that I should have fallen into such bad hands; confirmed me in the opinion I had formed of them; and communicated the following additional information. About four months ago their conduct had become so intolerable, that it was found necessary to summon them before the Sysselman's court; when, on investigation, it appeared that the wickedness of the children had not only prompted them to compose what the Icelanders call *Nidingavisar*, or infamous satirical songs, on the priest, and almost every person in the parish, but had assisted others in the composition of similar songs on their own parents. They were sentenced to be beaten with rods at home by the constable of the parish, and to stand public penance in the church, as a warning to the congregation. Nor were the parents allowed to pass with impunity. The bad conduct of the children was in a great measure to be ascribed to a neglected education, and the influence of evil example on their part; they were accordingly sentenced to pay a fine of sixty-eight rix-dollars, of which forty-eight was to go to the poor, and the remainder to defray the costs of the suit.

This day I experienced an inconvenience which I never felt before in my life—the total exhaustion of my stock of bread; and though I had some other articles of provision with me, I was keenly sensible of the privation.

The morning of the 26th being clear and serene, I struck my tent at an early hour, and proceeded on the road to *Eskifiord*. On the right the *Lagarfliot* stretched into the interior, lined on both sides with beautiful woods; on the left rose four very high mountains, the relative situation of which seemed to form a perfect square, while the prospect was bounded in the distance by *Sniâfiall*, a conic-shaped snow-mountain, and ancient volcano of immense size, whose glittering coat was finely contrasted by the blackness of the inferior hills. As the path appeared to be well-beaten, I left my servant to come with the baggage at his leisure, and

made the best of my way alone. I had not got far, however, when I was met by a peasant; who, perceiving I was a stranger, detained me with a great number of curious questions, which forcibly brought to my mind our Lord's injunction, "Salute no man by the way," Luke x. 4. Passing through a forest of birch trees, some of which might be about twenty feet high, I plunged into a deep valley, where I found the heat of the sun very oppressive; till, turning into another valley to the left, I proceeded up the sunless and snow-clad side of a high beetling mountain, and fully appreciated the worth of "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isaiah xxxii. 2. The name of this tract is *Eskifiords-heidè*; a mountain-road of considerable difficulty, owing to the bogs and deeply indented gulleys which alternately throw themselves in the way of the traveller; add to which, the very steep and stony ascent from the valley below. Just before you gain the summit of the pass, which is very narrow, you would suppose that a descent of a similar nature awaited you on the other side; whereas you are introduced, all at once, into a vast amphitheatre, several miles in circumference, the floor of which consists of immense fragments of broken rock, and streams of very ancient lava, which appear to have run through it in several directions. The continuation of the mountains round both sides of this amphitheatre is august and noble; but, what particularly attracts your attention, is the uncommon structure of the mountains to the right. Rising into pyramids, their sides discover numerous strata piled one above another; while four large excavations, forming perfect semicircles, run a considerable way into the body of the ridge, resembling, to compare great things with small, the niches left for images in the walls of ancient buildings. To the left lay a great quantity of snow, sheltered on the north and east, and completely exposed to the sun.

While scrambling among the stones my horse fell under me, and threw me forward into a very dangerous situation, had he risen immediately; but the sagacious animal did not make the least motion till he found I had extricated myself

from the stirrups, when he arose with the utmost composure, as if nothing had happened. Considering the rugged aspect of the place, I was struck with the narrow escape I had made, and felt an additional call for the exercise of the most lively gratitude to that gracious Being, by whose protecting care I rose from such a fall uninjured. Under this impression I was inspired with fresh courage, and a more determined resolution to meet without dismay the still greater dangers which I knew were yet before me.

After a very rough ride, of nearly two hours, I arrived at the south-east side of the amphitheatre, when the *Reydar* and *Eski Fiords* opened on my view, bounded on either side by exceedingly high mountains. The prospect, though confined in point of breadth, was very magnificent. On the north side of the *Eskifiord* I could descry the factory of the same name, together with a vessel that lay in the bay; yet, being nearly 2000 feet below me, they had a very diminutive appearance. The situation of the factory is very romantic. A long range of high mountains, which takes its rise on the *Heidè*, runs close behind the houses; and, being broken in several places, numerous cascades are poured over the precipices, and present a very fine spectacle. The pride of *Eskifiord*, however, is the prodigious mountain called *Holmafiall*, which, though on the opposite side of the bay, appears almost directly over head:

> "Irregularly huge, august, and high,
> Mass piled on mass, and rock on ponderous rock,
> In Alpine majesty;—its lofty brows
> Sometimes dark frowning, and anon serene,
> Wrapt now in clouds invisible, and now
> Glowing with golden sun-shine."

I was here kindly received by the Sysselman, Mr Vidalin, who is brother to the Bishop, and has perhaps travelled more than any other Icelander of modern times, having made several voyages to the East Indies and other distant parts. He not only surrendered to me his room and bed, but pressed me to mention any thing I wanted, as all he had was at

my service. On entering his room, I was happy to recognise a large quantity of Bibles and New Testaments which I had sent to this place. These he had unpacked, and arranged in the best order, but had not ventured to dispose of any till my arrival. I soon explained my plan to him; and I had the pleasure, before leaving the place, to witness the commencement of their distribution. The people had no sooner heard of their arrival, than they manifested, as in other places, the utmost desire of obtaining copies.

There were formerly three mercantile houses at this place, but at present there are only two, belonging to Messrs Isfiord and Wolff of Copenhagen, whose factors, as well as Captain Ipsen, the master of the vessel lying in the bay, shewed me every possible attention.

On the 27th I made a short excursion down the north side of the bay, for the purpose of examining some of the "miny caverns," with which this part of Iceland abounds; when I had an opportunity of collecting some fine mineralogical specimens, and contemplating the infinite wisdom of God in the beauty displayed in the exquisite groups of crystals which presented themselves to the view in every direction. The shores were strewed with valuable chalcedonies, and fragments of white marble; and at one place, not far from the factory, I observed a vein of a black semilucid substance, which had much the appearance of coal. Narrow ridges of horizontal trap also protuberate in various places.

The following morning I set off for *Holmar* church, accompanied by the Sysselman and one of the factors. Having turned the bay, we proceeded up the east side of *Holmafiall*, which we passed a little below the huge beds of columnar rock that form its base, and then descended to *Holmar*, where we arrived just as the service was going to commence. The subject of discourse was, "Christ's life on earth, a life of benevolence and usefulness." From the clergyman, Sira Guttorm Paulson, I met with the most cordial reception, and the rest of the day was spent in conversation about the interpretation of Scripture, the state of the Icelandic translations, and the wants of the people in a religious point

of view. Sira G. has spent some time at the university of Copenhagen, and possesses a superior acquaintance with the Greek language. In him the Bible cause has a warm friend; and much may be expected from his active exertions in the sphere in which he is placed.

Owing to the interesting conversation and distinguished hospitality of Sira Guttorm, I found it impossible to leave *Holmar* before noon on the 29th. Indeed, it was with deep regret that I had it not in my power to spend longer time at the different places where I halted; but the advanced state of the season required the utmost possible expedition. Having conducted me to the end of the *Reydar bay*, and given my servant proper directions respecting the road, Sira G. bade me an affectionate adieu, when I pursued my course towards the mountains. All along the east coast the mountains tower to a great height, and consist of numerous horizontal strata, which appear exactly facing each other, at such places as have been subject to disruption, and evidently dip as they recede from the sea.

From the end of the valley we passed up the side of a winding gulley; and, in the course of two hours, came to a spot where there was a little vegetation; leaving which, we proceeded down a rapid descent, and, following the course of a torrent, which was precipitated over the rocks to our left, we entered *Skriddal*, an extensive valley, which runs in a north-westerly direction, and opens into the *Herred*. We now turned to the left, and after having, with much difficulty, reached the upper end of the valley, we came to a mountainous tract, called *Stapsheidé*, the ascent of which we found very laborious, as it lay up the front of a narrow protuberance in the mountain, and was so excessively steep that we were obliged to lead our horses; and even then we could only gain the summit by nearly a hundred turns and windings, and stopping several times for a respite both to ourselves and the horses.

The *heidé* itself consisted of alternate tracts of snow, stones, and bogs; and ere we could reach the further end, we were completely benighted, and exposed to great danger

from the softness of the morass in which we got bewildered. Keeping as near as we could to the margin of a mountain-torrent on our right, we proceeded southwards, till a barrier was thrown in our way by a deep gulley, which came down from the mountains on the left, when, advancing to the point of the angle in which the two torrents met, we descended by a narrow and precipitous tract that led us into the river; but, after having, with great difficulty, crossed the water, we had the disappointment to find that the banks were so soft and steep that there was no possibility of climbing them. As my servant had rather a weak sight, I had to proceed down the deep channel in search of a place where we could extricate ourselves. Leading my horse, and wading the river repeatedly, every moment apprehensive of quicksands and cataracts, my only consolation arose from the Divine promise, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not. I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Isaiah xlii. 16. At the distance of nearly a quarter of a mile, I got my horse upon the right bank; and returning up the river to my servant, assisted him with the baggage-horses, which, after a great deal of trouble, we ultimately succeeded in drawing up out of the dark abyss. Though the tract felt rather marshy, yet, as there was grass for the horses, I determined to stop in it all night; a step I was the more induced to take, on account of the miry pits which we had reason to dread lay directly before us.

Having pitched my tent on the driest spot I could select, I sat down at the door, and spreading my frugal meal on my knees, while the servant brought me a draught of water from the stream, I began, with a whettened appetite, to partake of the bounty of Providence. A sense of divine preservation pervaded my mind; I reflected on my unworthiness of the least of God's mercies; the hair-breadth escapes I had experienced in my past life came under review; and, while I drew a parallel between myself and thousands of my fellow-creatures, who would esteem themselves happy to be in my circumstances, I was conscious of the soothing

emotions of peace and content. As I was musing on these things, a number of wild fantastic crags began to raise their pointed heads above the general gloom in which the waste was involved; and soon after the moon appeared in the clouded east, and, shooting a few feeble rays across the intervening mountains, afforded me a partial view of the seat of silence and desolation in which my lot for the night was cast.

Next morning, about ten o'clock, I lifted my tent, and pursued my journey to *Eydal*. The way lay now on the right and now on the left side of the river; and, as I passed along, I was struck with the appearance of fine chalcedonies, that were almost as numerous as "the stones of the brooks," among which they were scattered. Proceeding into *Breiddal*, I could not but admire the antic and singularly diversified shapes of the mountains on both sides, which continued to vary as I changed my position; and sometimes resembled the gables of houses, sometimes churches, castles, &c. but the prevailing appearance was that of lofty turrets and spires. Those at some distance, to the south, which divided *Breiddal* from *Berufiord*, were peculiarly striking. One of them so exactly resembled Edinburgh Castle, as seen from the north, that I almost fancied I saw it in the panorama. The name of this strangely peaked mountain is *Smâtindufiall*. Its appearance, from the south side of *Berufiord*, is nearly similar. A little to the left, the peaks of another mountain exhibited a striking likeness of St Paul's.

At five in the afternoon I arrived at *Eydal*, where Sira B. Eisleson, the Dean of South *Mulè* Syssel, resides. He was not at home himself, but I was made welcome by his lady, and the sister of the Landfoged in *Reykiavik*, with whom I carried on a long conversation chiefly relating to the external situation of the Icelanders, and the nature of true happiness. The determined manner in which I spoke of the necessity of internal religion; a religion in which the heart is interested, and which consists in active love to God and man; soon convinced them that I was a friend to the doctrines of Scripture, and that I had not imbibed the prin-

ciples of scepticism, which, they assured me, abounded in and about *Reykiavik*. The discourse then turned on the folly and the lamentable consequences of what is most improperly called free-thinking; and it afforded me great pleasure to find so much sound sense and intelligence among Icelandic females. The Dean came home in the evening; and, after reading the letters I delivered him, he declared he was no less surprised than pleased, at the agreeable news I had brought him. He repeatedly assured me, that his Deanery was in the greatest want of the Scriptures; and that the present supply could be viewed in no other light, than that of the manna which came down from Heaven. In his own parish are upwards of two hundred persons who can read; yet he did not believe there were more than twelve families that possessed a Bible, and but few were in possession of the New Testament.

On the morning of the 31st, I pursued my course along the coast. Having crossed *Breiddalsâ*, the road ran along the bottom of the most threatening cliffs; and being in a great measure defaced by the fragments which have been dislodged upon it, the horses had to proceed slowly, and with great caution. The striking change of scenery I found very agreeable. I had now an unlimited view of the blue face of the ocean. Its billows were dashing with tumultuous rage against the rocks below me, while I had on the right a lofty wall of rugged and precipitous crags, the summits of which were partially involved in mist, and beetled over the road in a tremendous manner.

About the middle of this rocky tract, a grand four-sided pyramid rises to an amazing height above the neighbouring cliffs, and exposes fairly to view the numerous horizontal strata of which it is composed. Beyond this, the land between the cliffs and the sea continues to open; and jutting out towards the south, where it is known by the name of *Berunes*, it is occupied by several rich farms, the owners of which are enabled, by their situation, to add the riches of the sea to the produce of the earth. On my arrival at the northern shore of the *Berufiord*, I hired a boat to take

me and the luggage across the bay, while my servant went round with the horses. By this means, I saved not less than fourteen miles travelling; and the expedient at the same time afforded my horses considerable relief. The width of the bay may here be about seven or eight miles.

At six o'clock in the evening, I landed at the factory of *Diupavog*, the most southerly harbour on the east coast. It consists only of one mercantile house, a *kram-bod*, or shop, and some warehouses; but they are all of a superior kind, both in point of size, and the taste with which they are erected. They are situated at the end of a narrow, but deep bay, which runs up from the *Berufiord*, and forms one of the safest harbours on the island. The trade, which is in the hands of Mr Busch of Copenhagen, and is managed by his factor, Mr Stephensen, is very considerable; the port being frequented not only by those who inhabit *Mulè* Syssel, to the south of *Stapshcidé*, but also by the inhabitants of east *Skaftafill's* Syssel. For the same reason it possessed great local importance relative to the object of my mission; and I was happy to learn that Mr Stephensen's literary and patriotic habits, would naturally induce him to give the cause in which I was engaged his cordial approbation and strenuous support.

This gentleman, to my no small concern, happened to be absent; but Madame Stephensen, whose father is a Norwegian clergyman, received and treated me in the kindest and most hospitable manner. I had a large room assigned me for my lodging, in which I was surprised to find a pretty voluminous circulating library, which the zeal of the proprietor has prompted him to establish, for the accommodation of such as may wish to cultivate different branches of science. Similar establishments, in different parts of Iceland, would be attended with unspeakable advantages; only care ought to be taken to exclude all books that have the most distant tendency to encourage vice, or disseminate the principles of irreligion, as they never fail to superinduce a train of vicious and immoral consequences. About the year 1790, a reading society was instituted in the south, by the

Archdeacon Magnussen, which continued to flourish till the close of the century, when it almost expired, and has never since been revived. Another was established in 1792, in the north country, under the direction of the Amtmand. The books belonging to the *Reykiavik* Society, which was instituted by the Danish merchants, are also allowed to enjoy a period of rest; which, however, is the less to be regretted, as most of them are reported to be of a poisonous and demoralizing tendency.

The following day, after having written a letter to Mr Stephensen, explanatory of the mode in which I wished the copies of the Scripture that had arrived at this harbour to be disposed of, as my horses had not yet come round the bay, I made a short excursion along the southern shore of the *Berufiord*, accompanied by Jonathan, Mr Stephensen's assistant, who is a native of the West Indies, and has spent several years at this place. At the distance of about three miles from the factory, we came to a long irregular range of cliffs, where "the shore, eat into caverns by the restless wave," exposed "the place of stones," and disclosed to the ravished eye some of the most unparalleled beauties of the mineral kingdom. In the hard rock were numerous and widely diversified crystallizations of quartz; but what particularly attracted my attention, was the zeolite, or star-stone, so called from the beautiful shining rays of crystal, which all diverge from a common centre, and terminate in a pyramidal form. It was imbedded in argillaceous earth, and on this account is easily dug out; but was so exceedingly brittle of itself, that it could hardly bear the removal of the clay. Of this mineral I met with many beautiful varieties. Some of these stars contain four-sided rays, or bars, of crystal, nearly as fine as hairs, and not more than a quarter of an inch from the centre to the circumference; others consist of bars, near a quarter of an inch in thickness, and three or four inches in length: while others are found in the shape of a goose's egg, but twice as large, which, on being broken, present a flat surface, consisting, at the one end, of a white, and white-bluish substance, resembling cornelian, and, at

the other, of beautiful bars of white crystal, that lie close together, like pillars in a bed of basalt. These last are covered with a thin coat of a light green colour, in which, in various places, small prominences appear, consisting of a greenish loose-grained substance. At the same place I found some small light stones, externally of the same colour, but, on being broken, they discovered a beautiful shining substance, which I take to be calcareous spar. Chalcedonies and red jasper also abound in the neighbourhood; and, though most of the European cabinets have been stocked with specimens from this place, in the selection of which the greatest waste has been made, it still contains inexhaustible treasures, and would richly repay the toils of the naturalist who spent a summer here in mineralogical researches.

As I surveyed this museum of natural curiosities, and reflected that little more than half a century has elapsed since the zeolite attracted the attention of naturalists, when they were sadly puzzled in endeavouring to account for its formation, I could not but adore Him whose all-skilful hand has given to the particles of matter the admirable order and regularity displayed in the composition of the minerals before me—whose workmanship infinitely transcends the proudest efforts of human genius, and baffles the most profound researches of inquisitive man.

At the distance of about six miles from the extremity of *Bulandsness*, which here juts out into the sea between *Berufiord* and *Hamarsfiord*, lie a number of islands, the largest of which is called *Papey*, and is supposed to derive its name from its having been inhabited by Christian fishermen from Ireland, or the western islands of Scotland, previous to the occupation of Iceland by the Norwegians. * It was formerly famous for its eider-down, yielding nearly a thousand pounds weight annually; but the ducks are said to have been frightened away from this and the neighbouring islands, by the firing of cannon from the English men-of-war, that lay here in order to protect the fishery.

* Landnâmabok, p. 2.

The 2d of September, I left the factory of *Diupavog*, and, after passing a number of columnar rocks which line the base of the high mountain called *Bulands-tinde*, I proceeded along the precipitous sides of a number of high and steep mountains, that overhang the northern shore of *Hamarsfiord*. A little within the debris of red sand-stone, which here appears conspicuously among the other component parts of the precipices, I came to a high mound of small stones and rubbish, that has visibly been raised by the hand of man, and seems destined to mark, to future generations, the ultimate abode of some son of mortality. It being low water, I crossed the bay nearly three miles below its termination, in which direction I could descry the summit of one of the east country *Yökuls* beetling over the inhabited tracts at its base. The road now lay round the ness, which divides the bays of *Hamarsfiord* and *Alptafiord*, and consists, for the most part, of a ridge of immensely high mountains, whose sides present a striking horizontal stratification. The parish of Hof lies along the extremity of the last mentioned bay, and consists principally of two deep vallies, which are terminated by the *Yökul*, and have had their meadow grounds greatly damaged by inundations of the rivers. Passing into a stony tract called *Tunga*, which bears pretty evident marks of its having been subjected to the convulsive effects of volcanic fury, I came, about eight in the evening, to a farm, the name of which is *Starmyra*, where I pitched my tent for the night. From this place, the coast runs a considerable way south, when, turning towards the west, it forms the *Auster Horn*, or East Foreland, which, from its situation and prominent appearance, is well known to the mariners who navigate these seas. The church of *Thvottâ* lies at no great distance, beyond which runs the river of the same name, in whose profluent stream Sidu-Hallr and his family were baptized by Thangbrandt, two years before the Christian religion was publicly received in Iceland.

From *Starmyra* I struck off towards the right, and, in the course of half an hour, entered *Lonsheide*, a rugged and dreary region, which is chiefly remarkable for its being the

boundary between *Mule* and *Skaftafel* Syssels, its having always proved a barrier to the contagion of infectious diseases; and its being almost perpetually enveloped in mist. Having descended by the side of a deep gulley, I came to a river which I skirted for some time, till I found myself shut in between two steep precipices that were separated from each other by the gulley through which the river was poured over successive cataracts at my feet. At first sight, the pass appeared absolutely insuperable; but, following the track, I came to a place which I can only describe by comparing it to a huge staircase; a number of rough steps having been formed by clearing away some of the stones, the ascent of which proved very fatiguing to the horses, as they had always to leap up from one standing-place to another, till they reached the summit. Though the ascent now got easier, it continued for a long time; and just as we gained the elevation of the *Heidi*, we were surprised by a tremendous chasm into which a large sheet of water is poured, so as to form a magnificent cascade. The fog being very dense, I could not see to a greater depth than ten or twelve yards; but I was told by the clergyman of the next parish, that the cascade is not less than seventy fathoms of perpendicular height.

The closeness of the mist, and the heavy rain that was blown, by a boisterous wind, directly in my face the whole time I was in the desert, rendered the ride very uncomfortable; yet comparing the few hours of bad weather I had now to endure, with the weeks of sunshine which I had enjoyed since setting out on my journey, I found that, instead of repining, I had the greatest cause to be resigned and thankful. On descending into the lower regions, we got into a clearer atmosphere, and proceeded across a long plain of sand and small stones, which have been washed down from the neighbouring *Jökuls*. We had the sea on the left, and at a short distance to the right, a range of large mountains, covered almost to the very base with mist. About four o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived at the parsonage of *Stafafell*, where I pitched my tent, resolving to spend the Lord's

day at that place. Its occupant, Sira Berg Magnussen, the Dean of East *Skaftafell* Syssel, was down at the sea on my arrival, but, having been sent for, he soon made his appearance, and I found in him one of the most animated and courteous Icelanders I had seen. He possesses no inconsiderable degree of intelligence; and speaks Danish with a facility that is rarely to be met with at a distance from the factories. He had been apprised of the new edition of the Scriptures, and waited with impatient anxiety for the arrival of copies in his district. In the parish of *Stafafell* are upwards of twenty families, yet there were only six Bibles among the whole; and Sira Berg himself had been endeavouring to procure a copy, for his own use, these *seventeen* years past, but had at last given up all hope of ever obtaining the treasure. His joy on receiving a copy from me was very great; and, previous to my departure, he wrote a circular letter to his clergy, desiring them to institute an immediate inquiry into the wants of their respective parishes.

The whole of this tract is called the *Lon*, from the stillness of the water within the sand-reef, which girds the coast at some distance from the shore. *Stafafell* possesses a large and beautiful tûn, and is situated at the foot of a low circular mountain, which has formerly been covered with trees; and, from that circumstance, obtained the name of the *Staff*, or Tree Mountain. On the west side of the parsonage is a low plain, nearly two miles in breadth, through which a formidable river, called *Vökulsâ-i-Lon*, is poured from the *Lons-Vökul*, a large ice mountain in the vicinity. It frequently happens in the spring, and late in the summer, that this river swells to such a degree, that the whole plain is inundated, and nothing appears between the mountains, on both sides, but one vast sheet of water. What renders it peculiarly dangerous to ford, is the frequency with which it changes its course, and the extreme softness of the bottom, owing to the immense quantities of clay and small stones which it brings along with it from the mountain. The worst, however, is, when vast floating fragments of ice are borne down by its fury. It then requires the greatest adroit-

ness to steer the horse between them. Sometimes they are so numerous, and follow each other in such close succession, that the river cannot be forded at all on horseback; it being impossible to turn the horse, with the agility requisite in order to elude them. The passenger is then obliged to wade, at the risk of his life. Sirá Berg informed me, that being once called to visit a dying parishioner, he went over in this way, though at times the water took him up to the breast. He had provided himself with a long pole, in order to examine the ground at every step; while he had to look around him, with the utmost alertness, lest fresh masses of ice should overtake him, bear him down before them, and, forcing him upon other pieces, cut him asunder.

The Lord's day being rainy, and the river having swoln considerably, there was no public service; as most of the people belonging to the parish of *Stafafill* live on the opposite side of the river, or at a considerable distance from the church. I spent most of the day in my tent, and while I read and meditated on select portions of the Bible, the hours passed rapidly and delightfully away.

CHAP. VI.

Vökulsá-i-Lon—West Forcland—Magnificent Prospect—Beautiful Basaltic Pillars—Ice Mountains of Myrar and Heinaberg—Basalts—Fellshverfi—Description of Breidamark Vökul, or Moving Ice-Field—Hypothesis respecting its formation, and change of position—Dangerous Vökul River—Öræfa Vökul and Volcano—Volcanic Eruption of 1727 described—Skaftafell—Topographical View—Moving Ice Mountain of Skeidcrá—Passage of the Skeidcrá—Promontory of Lomagnupr—Fliotshverfi.

As the rain continued unabatingly till about ten o'clock in the forenoon of the 5th, the *Vökulsá* had increased to such a degree, that Sira Berg did not think it advisable for me to attempt fording it. In the afternoon, however, as we apprehended more rain the following night, and the water had somewhat subsided, I struck my tent, and proceeded on my journey, accompanied by two men from the parsonage, who undertook to conduct me across. As I approached the river, it wore a very formidable appearance, covering almost the whole of the plain between *Stafafell* and the mountains in the vicinity of *Vestr-Horn*. Not being fordable at the usual place, we had to enter it higher up, where the branches were about thirty in number, some of which took our horses near the middle, and two of them were upwards of a hundred yards in breadth. The *Lavá*, which we had also to ford a little above its confluence with the *Vökulsa*, was still deeper; but we passed it without much difficulty, its water being clear, whereas that of the *Vökulsá* is white and muddy.

Having reached the base of the mountains, which are covered with debris more than half way up, I skirted it some time, till, crossing the valley, which leads up to a mountain-pass

called *Almannaskard*, I came to *Fiördr*, a farm close behind *Vestr Horn*, where I had my tent pitched at a short distance from the house. The *Horn*, or *West Forcland*, consists of three mountains; the lowest and most easterly of which, appears to have been split into three parts, and presents a very singular appearance, the divisions being all pointed at the summit, and the two on the sides inclining towards the higher one which stands between them.

Early on the morning of the 6th I proceeded up *Almannaskard*, on reaching the extremity of which, a prospect burst upon my view, the most novel, magnificent, and unbounded that I ever beheld. At my feet lay a stupendous precipice, whose base is washed by the sea, and which is certainly not less than nine hundred feet of nearly perpendicular height. The ocean, bounded only by the distant horizon, expanded towards the left. The *Hornafliot* appeared on the right; the eastern margin of which is beautifully ornamented with the farms constituting the parish of *Biarnaness*; beyond which, as far as the eye could sweep, nothing was seen but one vast chain of Yökuls, or ice-mountains, stretching back into the deserts in the interior, and terminating towards the west in the majestic *Örafa-Yökul*, the highest mountain on the island. The sparkling rays of the meridian sun, reflected from the marble snow with which the upper regions of the Yökuls are covered, the vivid green crust which forms their base, and the blue waves of the ocean, had a most exhilarating effect; and the whole of the scenery was calculated to produce in the mind the noblest and most sublime emotions. How vast and glorious are the works of God! How they reflect the splendour, majesty, and unlimited perfection of their Maker! But if such be the grandeur and beauty of creation; if the eye be dazzled with its lustre, and the most capacious mind be unable to grasp its immensity; how infinitely more excellent and glorious must *He* be, to whose all creative word they owe their existence, who dwells in light inaccessible; and before whom "the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance!"

Having stopped some time in order to contemplate the sublimity of this spectacle, I approached the east side of the pass, and proceeded down a very precipitous descent, the bottom of which I reached with extreme difficulty, as every step I took set the fragments of the rock in motion, and it required the utmost agility to avoid being rolled along with them into the hollow. The traveller is also here exposed to immense disruptions from the face of a rugged mountain, which overhangs the descent at the height of at least eleven hundred feet. Several of these had fallen apparently only a few days before I passed, and, not having been cleared away from the road, considerably impeded my progress. The mountains in this quarter wear a whitish appearance, and consist for the most part of thin slate stone, and a porous kind of basalt, the beds of which are distinguishable, in various places, by the regularity of their perpendicular columns. As the *Hornafliot*, a Yökul river nearly two miles in breadth, appeared to be much swelled by the late rains, I rodé up to a rich farm called *Arnaness*, the proprietor of which is an intelligent and judicious man, in order to request his guidance, when I met with a friendly reception, and, ere leaving the place, I was obliged to *borda*, i. e. dine with him, which I did on a most delicious dish of salmon trout that had just been taken in the river. Being unfordable at the usual place, the farmer sent his son about four miles farther up with me to his brother, who is Hrepstiori, from whom I got a man to conduct me across. Proceeding within a little of the *Hofsfell* and *Svinafell Yökuls*, and fording the rivers which they pour forth previous to their junction in the *Fliot*, I got over with the utmost ease.

From the west side of the water, to a farm named *Raudaberg*, where I pitched my tent, a distance of about three miles, the road lay through immense masses of variously situated columnar rocks, some of which appeared to have been thrown down from the adjoining mountains, and others were standing in their original beds. At one place especially, I almost fancied myself amid the ruins of some of the noblest structures of ancient Grecian architecture. The pillars were

piled one above another with the most perfect exactness, and arranged so as to form an entire semicircle. They stand quite perpendicular; some of the divisions may be about four feet in length, but in general they appeared to be from two to three feet. The most of them were six-sided; a considerable number had five, and some seven sides. Finding that such fragments as had been thrown down were mostly all concave at the one end, and convex at the other, I was anxious to ascertain their original position, and climbed up amongst the broken pillars, when I discovered that they were all concave at the upper end; and the excavation appeared to be more or less hollowed according to the convexity of the lower end of the joint that had stood upon it.

As I stood and admired the regularity and perfection of this natural colonnade, and the exactness with which the angles of the pillars were formed, my servant alighted from his horse, and, coming up to me, declared that the place was visibly the work of art, but that it was too stupendous to be the effect of human art. Such vast natural structures the natives call *Tröllahlad*, or "Giant's Wall;" the cavities found in ranges of smaller basalt are termed *Dverga-Kamrar*, or "Chambers of the Dwarfs;" and when they would describe any workmanship as particularly artificial, they give it the name of *Dverga-smidi:* all which proves, that, like the unenlightened of other countries, they have been accustomed to view such uncommon appearances as the production of certain intelligences superior to man. What cause have we to bless God for the light of science! While it annihilates the imaginary beings of superstitious invention, introduces us into the more secret recesses of the great cabinet of nature, and presents us with ever fresh discoveries of the wisdom, the power, and the greatness of her divine Creator. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," Psalm civ. 24. cxi. 2.

On approaching the farm, I found it surrounded by a natural fortification of basaltine pillars, which I had to skirt

for some time, till reaching a lower part of the circular range, which serves for a gate, I ultimately succeeded in gaining admittance. The people shewed a kind and obliging disposition, and seemed wonderfully pleased with a copy of the New Testament which I gave them, there not being any in the vicinity.

As the weather continued fine the following day, I advanced as far as *Reinavellir*, which lies at the eastern termination of *Breidamark-Yökul*, and about thirty-six miles from my former station. The first part of the road lay across alternate tracts of bogs and sand, at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the margin of the *Myrar* and *Heinaberg Yökuls*, which are only branches of the immense *Klofa Yökul*, a central chain of snow and ice mountains in the interior, connecting the numerous *Yökuls* that project towards the eastern coast of Iceland, and occupying a space of not less than three thousand square miles. In regard to form, they are considerably high and narrow behind where they leave the main mass, but run forward, sloping and spreading as they advance, till they reach the plain, which they line to the distance of ten or twelve miles, presenting a margin of from twenty to fifty feet high. Their curvated appearance, and their inclination round the barren peaks which they embosom, suggest the idea of a vast fluid body having moved forward into the plain, and congealed in the attitude they now present. In the upper regions, they appear to consist of the purest virgin snow; about the middle, they become blackish, owing, I suppose, to the admixture of sand and dust from the adjacent mountains; and a considerable way around the edge they assume a beautiful green tint, which, reflecting the beams of the sun, produces the most brilliant effect.

Besides several inferior streams, these Yökuls pour into the ocean three large rivers called *Hölmsâ*, *Heinabergs-vötn* and *Kolgrimarâ*, none of which, however, we found any great difficulty in passing except the first, which we had to attempt at different places ere we could get over. It is pretty deep, and is so completely filled with quicksands, that the

horses run the risk of sinking at almost every step, while the rapidity of the current greatly increases the danger. The *Heinaberg* discharges much more water, but, being more spread, it is not so deep, and runs through a more consolidated soil. The whole of this plain has formerly been well inhabited, but has been so dreadfully inundated by floods from the Yökuls, that the only farm now remaining is that of *Heinaberg*, which, at some distance, you would suppose actually situated in the midst of the ice.

Turning the end of a strangely rugged mountain, called *Hreggs-gerdismula*, and consisting, for the most part, of tuffa, in which were numerous holes of an immense size, presenting the atmosphere above; a most beautiful group of small basaltic pillars caught my eye, at the height of about seven hundred feet, in the face of an adjoining mountain. They had the appearance of so many bars of iron, bundled together at the top, but bulging out about the middle, from which, to the foot, they assumed a perfectly perpendicular position. The fragments that were scattered along the base of the mountain, were mostly all heptagonal. Beyond this, I obtained, at times, a distant view of the Yökul, till, passing several mountains diversified in shape, but all horizontally stratified, the valleys between which are tolerably well inhabited, I arrived at the plain before *Kálfafell*, when I was surprised by the prospect of a magnificent glacier, called *Kálfafells-Yökul*, which all at once falls with a rapid descent into the valley, and appears almost completely green. It would hardly be supposed that any vegetation could thrive in the vicinity of a spot, where, to use the words of the poet, "*stat glacies iners menses per omnes*;" yet the sides of the valley, close to the ice, seem uncommonly fertile, and yield pasture to a more numerous herd of cattle than I had seen any where in Iceland.

I now entered the wide plain into which the valley opens, and which has been totally inundated at some former period by the Yökul, and came, in the course of an hour and a half, to *Breidibólstadarfiall*, a tremendously beetling mountain, from whose sides immense fragments of rock have been

dislodged on the road; turning which, I entered a beautiful tract, called *Fellshverfi*, that lies between a lofty range of mountains receding from that just mentioned, and the *Breidamark Vökul*; and opening towards the sea, which may here be about three miles from the inner end of the valley. A little to the west of *Reinavellir*, stands an insulated mountain, called *Fell*, which is remarkable, on account of its being split completely to its base, at a short distance from its termination. Close to the foot of the disjointed cliff lies a farm of the same name, inhabited by a rich peasant, whose numerous family people the neighbouring cottages. Considering the number of earthquakes to which the island is subject, their situation does not, by any means, appear enviable; and, according to an ancient prophecy, the projecting rock is destined one day to crush the inhabitants to atoms; yet the present occupants seem to live in the utmost security, unintimidated by the impending precipice, which affords them an excellent shelter from the northern storms.

The 8th of September I shall ever recollect with feelings of the deepest interest, and the most lively gratitude to God for his merciful preservation. Having prevailed on the peasant of *Reinavellir* to conduct me over the *Vökulsâ a Breidamerkur-sand*, a river which I had been taught, by Captain Scheel, to regard as the most formidable and dangerous of all the rivers in Iceland, I proceeded towards the sand, which I gained, after fording a pretty broad river, called the *Vedurâ*. Its banks are lined with pieces of turf, and large fragments of trees, which it carries down from the interior of the Yökul.

The position and origin of this Yökul are quite peculiar. It is not so much a mountain, as an immense field of ice, about twenty miles in length, fifteen in breadth, and rising, at its greatest elevation, to the height of about four hundred feet above the level of the sand. The whole of the space it occupies has originally been a beautiful and fertile plain, which continued to be inhabited for several centuries after the occupation of the island; but was desolated in the dire catastrophe that happened in the fourteenth century, when

not fewer than *six* volcanoes were in action at the same time, and poured inconceivable destruction to the distance of near a hundred miles along the coast. * While the snow-mountains, in the interior, have been discharging their waters through this level tract, vast masses of ice must have been carried down by the floods, some of which, being arrested in their progress, have settled on the plain, and obstructing the pieces which followed, they have gradually accumulated, till, at last, the fresh masses that were carried to either side by the current, have reached the adjacent mountains, and the water, not having any other passage, has forced its way through the chasms in the ice, and formed channels, which, with more or less variation, it may have filled to the present period.

This theory of the formation of the *Breidamark Yökul*, will, in my opinion, not only account for its singular situation, but also explain its progressive motion, and other remarkable phenomena connected with this species of ice-mountains. Of its progress towards the sea, I was furnished with the amplest proof on passing along the margin. About the distance of a quarter of a mile from the south-east corner of the Yökul, I was surprised to find it traversing the track made in the sand by those who had travelled this way the preceding year; and, before reaching the point, I again discovered a track, which had been made only eight days previous to my arrival, lost and swallowed up in the ice. The same fact is confirmed by a comparison of the present length of the river, with what it was about fifty years ago. Olafsen and Povelsen,† describing it as the shortest river in Iceland, state it to have been scarcely a Danish mile, or about five British miles, from its egress to its junction with the sea at the time they passed it; whereas it does not now appear to exceed a British mile in length. Now, going back to its foundation, we shall suppose the Yökul did not originally occupy more than a quarter of a mile in breadth; or that

* Olafsen og Povelsen's Reise, p. 767, and Mr Paulson's MS. referred to p. 197.

† Reise, p. 785.

this was the extreme thickness of the barrier, consisting of fragments of ice, by which the melted snow from the mountains was obstructed in its course. Deranging the original constitution of the masses of ice, the water must alternately have flowed, and been dammed up, now perforating into this cavern, and now into that, while, gaining fresh strength from the quantity accumulated behind, it has at last carried the greater part of the ice-wall before it to some distance, and again left it to settle, as soon as it got vent into the plain. The depositions of ice, &c. would soon fill up the space that had been left; and new obstacles being presented to the river, by the falling in of the chasms and vaulted passages through which it flowed, successive revolutions of the same kind would ensue. The force of the water rushing into new caverns, the vent given to the imprisoned air, and the expansive power of the frost, accumulated in a degree proportionate to a body of such magnitude, must all have combined to elevate and convulse the Yökul; while the snow and ice it has been collecting for the space of four hundred years, will sufficiently account for its present size and form. What corroborates this hypothesis is the fact, that it is only in summer it advances, after a strong thaw on the snow-mountains; at which time, also, the river which it discharges, is poured forth, now at one place, and now at another. On such occasions, the natives say, *That er Hlaup i Anni*, "there is a run in the river;" and generally view it as unfordable, on account of the rapidity of the current, and the large masses of ice which it hurls from the bowels of the Yökul down to the sea. If this field of ice be not entirely carried away by some awful convulsion in the mountains behind it, the progress it is making will soon bring it to the sea; and, in the course of a few years, all communication between the southern and eastern districts by this route will be cut off.

In confirmation of the actual motion of this Yökul, it is with pleasure I lay before the reader the following interesting extracts from a Danish MS. in my possession, written by the learned surgeon Svend Paulson, and containing a

physical, geographical, and historical description of the ice mountains in Iceland: "The Yökul river, which shall afterwards be described, divides *Breidamark Yökul* into two parts internally. The division to the west of the river is more sloping, and its margin is lower, thinner, and more irregular: it has also a number of rents, and much gravel lies on its surface. Both on the surface, and in front of the Yökul, a number of sand banks make their appearance. The eastern division, on the other hand, is quite compact, and free from fissures; its margin is steep, and rises to the height of from sixteen to twenty fathoms. It is free from gravel, only a quantity of sand has, from time to time, been drifted on its surface. There are no heights in front, and the colour of the ice is that of a light grey. From these circumstances it is evident, that the western division has been, and still is, in greater motion than the eastern, though no remarkable retrogression has been observed similar to that of the *Skeidarâ Yökul.* Its motion consists in a constant but gentle progression." After endeavouring to account for the formation of the Yökul, Mr Paulson adds, in a note, "Such were the appearances of this Yökul in the summer of 1793, when I travelled past it the first time; but the following summer it had entirely changed its position. The division on the east side of the river had, by that time, advanced at least 200 fathoms from the line described by its margin the preceding year. The margin, at that time smooth and solid, was now completely altered, exhibiting, in one direction, large fissures and pyramids; in another, it was wholly excavated, and consisted of immense masses of ice, that had been thrown down from the main body of the Yökul. In those places where the margin still remained smooth and unaltered, it was visibly much elevated, and bulged out in the middle, like an earthen wall that is at the point of bursting by water collected behind it. There was, besides, a constant rumbling heard from the interior of the Yökul, and small streamlets ran here and there out of the fissures, accompanied with a disagreeable mist, and a penetrating insupportable cold. The part of the Yökul that

had slidden farthest forward was the most easterly, close to the river Vedurâ, where it completely covered the heights mentioned § 25; but it now appeared to have commenced its retreat, a number of sand hills having become visible in front.

" This progression of the Yökul took place all of a sudden, without any extraordinary discharge of water, about Whitsuntide, the above-mentioned year; and, while it continued, the neighbouring tracts were exposed to a continual mist, cold, and a small drizzling rain, which the inhabitants ascribed to the Yökul."

All along the margin, and a considerable way back, were deep indentations, and, in some places, chasms of an immense size, that penetrated farther than the eye could reach, and in which I could hear the distant dashing of the water as it fell from the surface of the Yökul. The margin consisted, for the most part, of large flat pieces of ice lying in all directions: sometimes it was as perpendicular as a wall; at others, the ice lay horizontally, forming vast crystal grottoes; and, what particularly struck me, was a number of small cavities and cells, in such parts of the surface of the ice as were not exposed to the sun, which were filled with the most beautiful pyramidic crystals, from a quarter of an inch, to an inch and a half in diameter. In some places, the interior of the grottoes was completely studded with these crystal groups, sparkling with a dazzling lustre, and assuming various hues, according as they were more or less exposed to the light.

Towards the bottom of the slope, the ice has collected so much sand and clay, that it assumes a black and dark grey colour: higher up, where the heat of the sun has less influence, the winter snows remain undissolved, and give the Yökul a whiter appearance; and, what is remarkable, at some distance from the margin, a vast number of round pillars, resembling sugar-loaves, only more pointed at the top, begin to rise above the surface, and extend back to the regions of snow. They are quite black in appearance, and may be from three to twenty feet in height. Where the Yökul has

pushed forward in one direction, and again receded, large heaps of clay, sand, and turf, are thrown up, so as to form a catenation of small hills round its base; but where its progress is continuing, no such hills are seen; only furrows are laid open in the sand, by the sharp projecting pieces of ice, and the sand is raised, precisely as the ground by a plough, to either side. In some places, I could plainly observe the motion of the sand; but whether it arose from the actual progress of the Yökul, or merely from the dissolution of the ice, I shall not determine. Before getting within lee of the margin of the Yökul, I was keenly sensible of the extremes of heat and cold; a sharp piercing wind blowing from the Yökul on the one side, while the scorching rays of the sun beat on the other. On reaching the ice, the cold entirely ceased, and I was thrown into a violent perspiration, though sitting at ease on my horse.

About one o'clock, we arrived at the usual channel of the river, which lay at least ten feet below the general surface of the sand; and were surprised to find that, as far as we could see, there was not the least appearance of water. The guide was the more alarmed at this, as, how much soever the river had shifted its course each summer, it was always distinctly visible from this spot; and, only eight days before, when a Danish gentleman passed this way, it had flowed in the channel before us. Having descended into this channel, and proceeded to some distance, not without difficulty, owing to the numerous holes, filled with quicksand, that had been formed by the melting of the large masses of ice deposited there on the subsiding of the water, the guide averred, that the river had entirely disappeared; and, looking at me, told me, seriously, he believed I was endowed with a superior degree of good fortune to any other traveller that had ever passed this way. Urging him to proceed with me a little farther, till we should learn the certainty of the matter, we had not rode a quarter of a mile, ere we were convinced, by its tumultuous roar, and the height of its breakers, that the river not only existed, but was as impetuous and dangerous as ever. The nearer we approached it, the more formidable it

appeared; and I certainly would not have had the courage to attempt fording it, had it not been for the confidence inspired by the following lines of the Hebrew bard:

" Jehovah! the floods lift up,
" The floods lift up their voice;
" The floods lift up their waves.

" Than the voice of many waters,
" Mightier than the breakers of the sea,
" Mighty on high is Jehovah!" Psalm xciii. 3, 4.

Crossing several inferior branches, we gained a sand-bank, past which the principal stream was rolled; but the current was so impetuous, and the huge shoals of ice that were hurled along seemed so difficult to be avoided, that our guide deemed it more advisable to attempt the passage of the Yökul itself, directly above the egress of the river. Though rarely practicable by horses, it is seldom the Yökul may not be crossed on foot; and it is only in this way that sheep can be conveyed to the opposite side. Leaving his horse, therefore, he climbed up among the cavities and walls of ice, in order to look for a passage; but the fissures and chasms were so tremendous, that he was obliged to desist from the perilous attempt, lest, missing a foot, he should be

—— " Transfixed, numb'd in icy cells,
" Or shrouded in unfathom'd folds of snow."

The source of the river was only two stone-casts from us, whence the water boiled and raved to a most furious degree, now rising and now subsiding, yet constantly carrying out with it immense fragments of ice, which it swept along to the sea.

On the return of our guide, we rode a little farther down, and as there was no other alternative, we entered the stream; the guide going first with his long pole, in order to probe the bottom, my servant and the baggage horses following after, while I myself brought up the rear. Having got so deep that the water had no longer a free passage between

our horses' legs, it rose like a wave against their sides, and the current being strong and rapid, threatened to sweep us all before it. As the guide's horse was not strong, he was very nearly borne down, the baggage-horses were also swung round, and my own, though possessing more strength than any of them, when he found the current getting too strong for him, threw himself against the stream side, and almost precipitated me into the flood. Owing to the suddenness with which he assumed this position, I was apprehensive that the stream had carried his feet out from below him; but I soon found it was a natural instinct in the animal, prompting him to recline with all his weight against the impetuosity of the water; and, balancing myself as well as I could, I sat in great suspense till he brought me to the opposite bank. Nor did our dangers terminate here. We had still several branches to ford, scarcely less furious than that we had crossed; and I had not gained one of the banks two minutes, when a huge piece of ice, at least thirty feet square, was carried past me with resistless force. The foaming of the flood, the crashing of the stones hurled against one another at the bottom, and the masses of ice which, arrested in their course by some large stones, caused the water to dash over them with fury, produced altogether an effect on the mind never to be obliterated.

Having reached the opposite side of the river in safety, we all took off our hats, and returned thanks to the God of our lives for his kind care and protecting mercy, of which he had afforded us so signal an experience on this occasion. It now became a question what line of conduct the guide ought to adopt. He was so deeply impressed with a sense of the dangers he had just escaped, that he had scarcely the resolution to return; yet, reflecting that his absence would create great alarm in his wife and family, natural affection at length prevailed, and having obtained a promise that we would not set off till we saw him on the opposite bank, he again braved the fury of the flood; and after a number of narrow escapes, we could but just descry the appointed signal—so great was the distance between us.

Sketched by J. Hallstein

Engraved by W.&D. Lizars Edin.r

ÖRÆFA YÖKUL AS SEEN FROM THE BREIDAMARK RIVER

From the egress of the river, *Breidamark Yökul* stretches in a north-west direction, till it is relieved by the *Öræfa Yökul*, the lower division of which is spread over the low mountains that line the coast, and is quite green, while the upper regions, consisting of the purest snow, tower to the height of 6240 feet in the horizon. * Between the two Yökuls, a

* As *Öræfa* Yökul is the highest mountain in Iceland, it is presumed the following description of its ascent from Mr Paulson's MS. will not be uninteresting to the reader.

"We left *Qviskér*, (a small solitary farm at the eastern base of the mountain,) a quarter before six in the morning of the 11th of August, 1794, with a clear atmosphere and calm weather, after having furnished ourselves with a barometer, a thermometer, a small compass, a pointed hammer, a long pole, and a rope about ten fathoms in length. Our route lay up the precipitous mountains, which form the base of the Yökul, till we gained the ice at a quarter before nine o'clock, when we rested a few minutes on a small height, at the base of which we observed several specimens of the beautiful Alpine plant, *Ranunculus nivalis*, some of which had already withered. Such as had recently blossomed had snow-white petala, but those of longer standing were more or less red, resembling a saffron yellow. This plant is very rarely to be met with on the Southern Alps of Iceland. The barometer had now fallen from 26° 4½′, where it stood at *Qviskér*, to 25° 4½′, and the heat was 8½° of Reaumur. The margin of the Yökul had evidently pushed forward against the height on which we stood, and raised a wall of small stones and sand nearly half up its side, but had again retreated to the distance of several fathoms.

"Having bound myself to my two companions by means of the rope, leaving a distance of two fathoms between each, that we might assist each other, in case any of us should happen to fall into a rent of the ice, we proceeded up the Yökul, but had scarcely advanced twenty paces, when we heard a noise louder than thunder, running as it were longitudinally through the whole ice mountain from S. to N. accompanied with a perceptible concussion under our feet, which lasted for about a minute. My companions now wished to return, but though this shock retarded our progress a few moments, a kind of natural impulse to visit these icy Alps prompted me to continue my ascent; and we afterwards found, that the report was occasioned by what is called *Yökul-brest*, or Yökul-burst, the ice having disrupted and fallen in from either side of a valley, about a mile (five English miles) in length. We continued our route up the south-east side of the Yökul where it was least acclivitous, passing a number of black tuffa rocks, and crossing a multiplicity of fissures deeper than the eye could reach. Here, as is common at such elevations, the atmosphere got too thin to admit of our breathing with freedom. One of our party was so much affected and felt such an inclination to sleep, that he remained behind us, and on lying down on the bare ice, immediately fell asleep; the other, naturally subject to a beating at the heart and melancholy, found himself more relieved and cheerful

narrow black mountain rears its peaked summits, and though engulphed in eternal snows, its sides and gullies are clothed with verdure, and the neighbouring cottagers drive their sheep over the ice to feed there during the summer. In our progress across the sand we were met by several other considerable rivers, the principal of which are the *Breidâ*, the *Deildarâ*, and the *Hrutâ*, but none of them occasioned us any difficulty; leaving which, we came to the south-east corner of the *Öræfa Yökul*, where we obtained the view of a magnificent glacier which has been precipitated from near the summit of that Yökul, and, on coming in contact with *Breidamark* Yökul, it appears to have impelled it forward to some distance.

We now entered a tract the most doleful and haggard that can possibly be conceived. It consists of the ruins of a range of mountains that had been convulsed to their very foundations in the year 1362, when the Yökul burst with

the higher we ascended, without being sensible of any particular fatigue from the tenuity of the air. We at length gained the south-east peak of the Yökul at a quarter before twelve o'clock, and found, that, in conjunction with the three or four other peaks to the west and north, it describes the side of an immensely large crater of a circular form. These peaks on the summit of the Yökul are so precipitous, that the mass of ice has in different places disengaged itself, and fallen down from them, leaving a number of black calcined rocks, the tops of which are covered with hats of frozen snow, and for the most part inaccessible, as a single false step would inevitably precipitate the traveller into the unfathomable chasms at their base. The barometer fell here to 22° 6″, or 5° 10½″, from what it was at *Qvikkr*. The thermometer, at the same height with our eye from the surface of the Yökul, stood at 11½° of Reaumur. The atmosphere was clear, and the wind blew keenly from the north. We could not discover any irregularity of the compass, and the whole of its variation was two points towards the west.

"The prospect was naturally enchanting. We had a view of all the Yökuls and mountains towards the north-east, between the spot on which we stood and *Hormafiord*, and the situation of *Máfabyggdir*, a little to the north-west of *Breidamark* mountain, from which two chains of sandy and stony mountains project towards the south-east, to the spot where the river breaks forth from the foundation of the Yökul. Towards the west, the *Eyafialla* Yökul rose majestically before us, and in a northerly direction, we could descry the summit of *Snækfiall*, but were prevented from seeing the regions in the interior by the peaks of the Yokul intercepting our view. We again reached *Qvikkr*, much fatigued, about half-past four o'clock in the afternoon."

a dreadful explosion, and completely devastated the coast in the vicinity. All around us lay immense masses of tuffa or hardened clay, filled with innumerable small black stones, which, upborne by the violence of subterraneous heat, have been whirled down in this direction, and lodged in the wildest confusion along the foot of the Yökul. Towards the heart of the mountain stretched a gloomy gulley, terminated by rugged shapeless rocks, round which, in every direction, lay masses of hoary ice, connecting with the Yökul behind, and mixing in every possible form with the ancient erupted matter of the volcano; so that to no place could the poetic description of the throne of winter more aptly or more literally apply:

> "Beyond the pointed cliffs that girt the coast,
> Extending to the dark horizon round,
> Were huge dark masses of mis-shapen rocks,
> With dreary glens between, rude defiles, fill'd
> With frozen snow, accumulating still,
> And glaciers vast of everlasting ice;
> A cheerless solitude, where nought was heard
> But the wild uproar of contending winds,
> Which, howling, swept at intervals the waste." *

Leaving this singularly gloomy desert, we passed over a sloping hill, for the most part covered with moss, and intersected by deep ravines, made by the inundations from the Yökul, and came into a level tract called *Hnappafells-sandur*, consisting of fragments of obsidian, pumice, slag, and large erupted masses of tuffa, some of which are entire, and others have been split into several divisions by the violence of their fall. The north side of this plain is bounded by a high ridge of precipitous mountains, on which the Yökul rests at its basis; and near the middle, where there are two breaks in the ridge, the cliffs stand quite insulated, in the cold embrace of two glaciers, which hang down almost perpendicularly to the very end of the plain. About eight o'clock in

* Poetical Effusions, p. 12. Kendal, 1814

the evening we arrived at *Hnappavellir*, so called from the Yökul that beetles over it at a great height, in which there is a large round black spot, like a knap or button, forming a striking contrast to the whiteness of the snow. It consists of two farms, which are situated close together; and, as I pitched my tent between them, the inhabitants seemed to dispute with each other to whom the right of hospitality ought to belong, bringing me large dishes of excellent cream, and, what I had not before observed in the east country, begging I would excuse them if I did not find it so *polished* as I might wish. The prospect of obtaining copies of the Bible gave them great joy; for there were none in the vicinity, and some of them had not so much as ever seen the precious volume. Scanty and precarious, therefore, as the pittance is which nature affords them, the famine they labour under is not so much a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, as a famine of the words of the Lord. Blessed be his name! there is reason to hope, that before twelve months have elapsed, it may be said of this desert (*Öræfi*,) " it shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the deaf shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert," Isaiah xxxv. 1, 2—5, 6.

Directly opposite to *Hnappavellir* is the promontory of *Ingolfshöfdi*, which derives its name from the circumstance of its being the spot where Ingolf, one of the first Norwegian settlers, landed, when he came out the second time in order to establish himself on the island. It has originally formed part of the main-land, but having been separated from it in some of the dreadful convulsions that have raged in the vicinity, it now forms a long insulated rock, which rises as it stretches into the sea, and ultimately falls perpendicularly into the water. At this place the sand reef ends,

which, beginning at the north side of *Hammarsfiord*, runs along the whole of the south-eastern coast, at the distance of from one to two miles from the shore. From the *Horns* the coast stretches in a south-westerly direction till it reaches this promontory, when it immediately turns due west, and consists of a vast level tract, for the most part sandy, and interscinded in divers places by broad rivers from the snow and ice mountains: the inhabited grounds lying along the front of the low mountains, which project from the interior, and line the sand in many parts, at the distance of fifteen and twenty miles from the sea.

Before leaving this station, I was furnished with a new proof of the disinterestedness of Icelandic hospitality. As my horses now began to get very fatigued from the length and nature of the journey, it became necessary for me to have them exchanged; and mentioning the circumstance to one of the peasants, he instantly trucked a strong fresh horse against one of my lean ones, without so much as expecting a single shilling to the bargain. This the natives call *Hesta-kaup*, and regard it as a duty they are indispensably bound to discharge towards travellers who may stand in need of their assistance in this way.

From *Hnappavellir* the road lay across a sloping swampy tract, which here stretches down from the foot of the Yökul, and brought us, in the course of an hour, to the brow of an abrupt descent, down which we proceeded, having on the left hand the beginning of the extensive sand just described, and close by, on the right, the rudely excavated side of a low mountain, where the range commences which forms the western base of the Yökul. Skirting the foot of these mountains, we arrived about eleven o'clock at a farm called *Hof*, where, as my servant wished to transact some business with the peasant, I stopped for more than two hours. A little to the north of this, I was shewn a high, white, and conic-shaped mountain, on the summit of which is an altar, consisting of a large square stone, somewhat hollowed in the middle, where human sacrifices were presented in the days of heathenism. The place is called *Goda-borg*. All the

mountains in the vicinity are very precipitous; overhang the farms that are situated at their base; and besides having been subjected to the destructive effects of subsequent eruptions, appear evidently to be of volcanic formation. The farmer, who is known over the whole island by the name of "David of the wilderness," is remarkable on account of his enthusiastic fondness for ancient Scandinavian literature, and retains, perhaps, more of the habits and dispositions of his forefathers than any of his countrymen at the present day. He possesses upwards of a hundred sagas in MS. most of which he has by heart; and confirms almost every assertion by a long quotation of ancient authorities. He has also collected a vast number of more recent poems and rhymes, and is himself a rhymer.

Having exchanged another horse at this place, and got some of the rest shod, we set out on the road to *Skaftafell*, a farm from which the Syssels derive their name, and were accompanied by David, who undertook to guide us across the tract that was laide waste by an exundation from the western division of the Yökul, in the year 1727. It lies almost directly opposite to the church and parsonage of *Sandfell*, from which the ice-mountain behind takes the name of *Sandfell's-Yökul*, and consists of calcined stones, tuffa, pumice, and immense fragments of the Yökul, which, sheltered from the heat of the sun by the ashes and small stones that cover them, remain unmelted, and greatly retard the progress of the traveller. Some of the stones are of vast magnitude, little inferior to houses; and, from the large holes with which they are perforated, appear to have been exposed to an uncommonly strong degree of subterraneous heat. As no authentic account of this dreadful exundation of the *Örafa* volcano has, as far as I know, ever been published in England, I will here insert the translation of a letter, addressed by Sira Jon Thorlakson, at that time minister of *Sandfell*, to Secretary Olavius, and published in his Economical Travels in Iceland, Copen. 1780, 4to.

"In the year 1727, on the 7th of August, which was the tenth Sunday after Trinity, after the commencement of

divine service in the church of *Sandfell*, as I stood before the altar, I was sensible of a gentle concussion under my feet, which I did not mind at first; but, during the delivery of the sermon, the rocking continued to increase so as to alarm the whole congregation; yet they remarked that the like had often happened before. One of them, a very aged man, repaired to a spring, a little below the house, where he prostrated himself on the ground, and was laughed at by the rest for his pains; but, on his return, I asked him what it was he wished to ascertain? to which he replied, "Be on your guard, Sir; the earth is on fire!" Turning, at the same moment, towards the church door, it appeared to me, and all who were present, as if the house contracted and drew itself together. I now left the church, necessarily ruminating on what the old man had said; and as I came opposite to *Mount Vlaga*, and looked up towards its summit, it appeared alternately to expand and be heaved up, and fall again to its former state. Nor was I mistaken in this, as the event shewed; for on the morning of the 8th, we not only felt frequent and violent earthquakes, but also heard dreadful reports, in no respect inferior to thunder. Every thing that was standing in the houses was thrown down by these shocks; and there was every reason to apprehend, that mountains as well as houses would be overturned in the catastrophe. What most augmented the terror of the people was, that nobody could divine in what place the disaster would originate, or where it would end.

"After nine o'clock, three particularly loud reports were heard, which were almost instantaneously followed by several eruptions of water that gushed out, the last of which was the greatest, and completely carried away the horses and other animals that it overtook in its course. When these exundations were over, the ice mountain itself ran down into the plain, just like melted metal poured out of a crucible; and, on settling, filled it to such a height, that I could not discover more of the well-known mountain *Lomagnupr*, than about the size of a bird. The water now rushed down the east side without intermission, and totally destroyed what

little of the pasture-grounds remained. It was a most pitiable sight to behold the females crying, and my neighbours destitute both of counsel and courage: however, as I observed that the current directed its course towards my house, I removed my family up to the top of a high rock, on the side of the mountain, called *Dalskardstorfa*, where I caused a tent to be pitched, and all the church utensils, together with our food, clothes, and other things that were most necessary, to be conveyed thither; drawing the conclusion, that should the eruption break forth at some other place, this height would escape the longest, if it were the will of God, to whom we committed ourselves, and remained there.

" Things now assumed quite a different appearance. The Yökul itself exploded, and precipitated masses of ice, many of which were hurled out to the sea; but the thickest remained on the plain, at a short distance from the foot of the mountain. The noise and reports continuing, the atmosphere was so completely filled with fire and ashes, that day could scarcely be distinguished from night, by reason of the darkness which followed, and which was barely rendered visible by the light of the fire that had broken through five or six cracks in the mountain. In this manner the parish of *Öræfa* was tormented for three days together; yet it is not easy to describe the disaster as it was in reality; for the surface of the ground was entirely covered with pumice-sand, and it was impossible to go out in the open air with safety, on account of the red-hot stones that fell from the atmosphere. Any who did venture out, had to cover their heads with buckets, and such other wooden utensils as could afford them some protection.

" On the 11th it cleared up a little in the neighbourhood; but the ice-mountain still continued to send forth smoke and flames. The same day I rode, in company with three others, to see how matters stood with the parsonage, as it was most exposed; but we could only proceed with the utmost danger, as there was no other way except between the ice-mountain and the Yökul, which had been precipitated into the plain, where the water was so hot that the horses almost got un-

manageable; and, just as we entertained the hope of getting through by this passage, I happened to look behind me, when I descried a fresh deluge of hot water directly above me, which, had it reached us, must inevitably have swept us before it. Contriving, of a sudden, to get on the ice, I called to my companions to make the utmost expedition in following me; and, by this means, we reached *Sandfell* in safety. The whole of the farm, together with the cottages of two tenants, had been destroyed; only the dwelling-houses remained, and a few spots of the *tûns*. The people stood crying in the church. The cows which, contrary to all expectation, both here and elsewhere, had escaped the disaster, were lowing beside a few hay-stacks that had been damaged during the eruption. At the time the exundation of the Yökul broke forth, the half of the people, belonging to the parsonage, were in four newly-constructed sheep-cotes, where two women and a boy took refuge on the roof of the highest; but they had hardly reached it, when, being unable to resist the force of the thick mud that was borne against it, it was carried away by the deluge of hot water, and, as far as the eye could reach, the three unfortunate persons were seen clinging to the roof. One of the women was afterwards found among the substances that had proceeded from the Yökul, but burnt, and, as it were, parboiled; her body was so soft that it could scarcely be touched. Every thing was in the most deplorable condition. The sheep were lost; some of which were washed up dead from the sea, in the third parish from the *Örafa*. The hay that was saved was found insufficient for the cows, so that a fifth part of them had to be killed; and the most of the horses, which had not been swept into the ocean, were afterwards found completely mangled.* The eastern part of the parish of *Sida* was also destroyed by the pumice and sand; and the inhabitants were, on that account, obliged to kill many of their cattle.

* According to Chief Justice Stephensen's statement, not fewer than 600 sheep and 160 horses perished in this eruption. See Iceland in the Eighteenth Century, p. 24. Copen. 1808, 8vo.

"The mountain continued to burn night and day, from the 8th of August, as already mentioned, till the beginning of summer, in the month of April the following year, at which time the stones were still so hot, that they could not be touched; and it did not cease to emit smoke till near the end of summer. Some of them had been completely calcined; some were black and full of holes; and others were so loose in their contexture, that one could blow through them. On the first day of summer 1728, I went in company with a person of quality to examine the cracks in the mountain, the most of which were so large that we could creep into them. I found here a quantity of saltpetre, and could have collected it, but did not choose to stay long in the excessive heat. At one place, a heavy calcined stone lay across a large aperture; and as it rested on a small basis, we easily dislodged it into the chasm, but could not observe the least sign of its having reached the bottom. These are the more remarkable particulars that have occurred to me with respect to this mountain; and thus God hath led me through fire and water, and brought me, through much trouble and adversity, to my eightieth year. To Him be the honour, the praise, and the glory for ever." Pp. 602—607.

As those who live in the vicinity of the volcano, had heard a number of *Vökkahliod*, i. e. reports in the Yökul this summer, they were living in the apprehension that a fresh revolution was at hand; such crackings and reports being considered as precursors of the calamitous event. It seems, however, more probable, that they were occasioned merely by the disruption of certain parts of the ice, in virtue of its own weight; especially as it has made considerable approximations towards the plain since last winter. It was my intention to have rode up to the foot of the mountain, and visited the present incumbent of *Sandfell*, but having been apprised of his absence from home, I pursued my course over a long tract of ashes and sand, which was ultimately relieved by a morass, that appeared to have the same materials for its foundation. The farm of *Skaftafell*, lying on

the brow of a hill, was conspicuous at a distance, but we were benighted before we got within three miles of it, and had two formidable rivers to cross, the one of which, though not so broad, had nearly as rapid a current as that of the river on *Breidamark-sand*. After we had rode some time in the direction in which the house had appeared while it was light, we came to the eastern bank of the roaring *Skeiderâ*, and entered a deep gulley to the right, but were instantly arrested by a steep hill, which debarred all further progress. Surrounded as we were, on every hand, by Yökuls and Yökul rivers, enveloped in darkness, and not being able to find any pass by which we might extricate ourselves, we began to feel our situation very unpleasant, and it is difficult to say what alternative we would have chosen, had we not been most agreeably relieved in the midst of our perplexity by a dog which "howled from the hut of the hill," at the distance of not more than a stone-cast above us. Never shall I forget the joyful emotion that started in my breast on this occasion; and while I meditate on the occurrence, I am more than ever convinced that there is no such thing as chance under the government of God, and that all things, whether animate or inanimate, rational or irrational, are the subjects of his influence, though the mode of that influence be hidden from us, and contribute, each in its place, and according to the nature with which he hath endowed it, to the advancement of his infinitely wise and gracious designs.

On the 10th, we had a continuation of the same clear and favourable weather we had enjoyed the whole of the week. As one of the baggage-horses had gone astray in the night, I had plenty of time on my hand, and ascended the mountain behind *Skaftafill*, in the hopes of being able to command a prospect of the ice-mountains in the interior; but after I had, with considerable exertion, reached the summit, I had the disappointment to find, that a long ridge of rugged pointed cliffs intercepted the view in that direction. However, I had no reason to regret my toil, for I had still a noble and magnificent exhibition of the east country Yö-

kuls. To the south-east, rose the *Öræfa Vökul*, vying in splendour and altitude with the meridian sun. From the regions of perpetual snow, descended the glaciers of *Sandfell*, *Svinafell*, and *Skaftafell*, the smaragdine appearance of whose base had the most vivid and enchanting effect. The flat sandy country in front, was beautifully divided by the multifarious branches of the *Skeiderá*, which has its egress close by, and pours an immense quantity of water into the main. Below me, to the right, lay the broad *Skeiderá Vökul*, over which, towards the north, appeared the ice mountains in the vicinity of the *Skapta* volcano; while due west, beyond the dark projecting *Lomagnupr*, I could descry the lofty *Eyafialla Vökul*; to the north of which rose the aqua-igneous volcano *Kötlugiá*, whose tremendously yawning crater was distinctly visible. Behind *Skaftafell* lies a pretty extensive valley called *Morár-dal*, which has constituted a parish in former times; but it has been entirely depopulated by the encroachments of the surrounding ice, and is now remarkable for nothing but its stunted forest, consisting of mountain-ash, birch, and willows, and a hot spring, the water of which, however, is not hotter than to admit of a person's holding his hand in it without being scalded. Previous to the fourteenth century, the whole of the district, between this place and *Breidamark-sand*, formed a fertile and populous tract, under the denomination of *Litla Herad*, but has suffered so much from the effects of volcanic fury, that it now contains only *eight* farms, and well answers to its present name, *Öræfi*, or "the Desert."

Having got all ready, we left *Skaftafell* about noon, accompanied by the peasant, who had undertaken to guide us through the different rivers that lay in our way. Following him into the *Skeiderá*, and proceeding in a zig-zag direction from one sand-bank to another, now fording the branches against the current, and now with it, we got across this damp roaring river without much difficulty in somewhat less than an hour. On our right we had the *Southern Skeiderá Vokul*, which in situation and size pretty much resembles that of *Breidamark*, only it is not so high. Being more

ÖRÆFA YÖKUL AS SEEN FROM THE BASE OF LOMAGNUPR

exposed to ashes, sand, &c. from the adjacent volcanoes, it is much blacker than any of the Yökuls along the coast, and its aspect is rendered still darker by the rocks which appear in it at different places, and which it has carried along with it from their original beds in the interior. But what makes it peculiarly remarkable, is the alternate progression and retrogradation to which at certain periods it is subjected. Some years it pushes forward till nearly in a line with the ancient promontory of *Lomagnupr*, and then moves back again to the distance of more than half a mile. In 1727, when both the *Öræfa* and *Northern Skeiderâ* volcanic Yökuls were in activity, this low Yökul began to rock, to the great danger and consternation of some people who happened to be travelling on the sand before it. According to the account they afterwards gave, it moved backwards and forwards, undulating at the same time like the waves of the sea, and spouting from its foundations innumerable rivers, which appeared and vanished again almost instantaneously, in proportion to the agitation of the Yökul. As the progress it made was inconsiderable, the spectators saved themselves on a sand-bank, but the suddenness and unexpectedness with which the rivers continued to rush forth, rendered it impossible to travel any more that way the whole summer. *

On reaching the middle of the sand, we fell in with the remains of the projection that took place in 1787, consisting of an elevation of from thirty to fifty feet, and covering an extent of several acres, the surface of which has the same appearance with the rest of the sand. At first I had no idea of its being any thing else than an immense sand bank, or a rising ground, which had withstood the violence of the floods; but, after riding more than a mile on it, I discovered that I was proceeding over masses and caverns of ancient ice; and had it not been for the intelligence and experience of our guide, I certainly would not have hazarded the prosecution of my journey in this direction. Descending into a hollow, we passed through between extensive pools of white water,

* See Olafsen's og Povelsen's Reise, p. 780.

and rounded several sources from which considerable rivers were poured forth into the sand. This region may be about three quarters of a mile from the present margin of the Yökul; and near the middle of the intervening space are a number of inferior heights which have been left on the regress of the Yökul in 1812, the last time it was observed to be in motion.

To explain the cause of these phenomena, recourse has been had to a subterranean communication between this Yökul and the neighbouring volcanoes; but its progress may be accounted for on the same principle with that we have adopted in regard to *Breidamark Yökul*; and it seems equally natural to conclude, that its falling back is occasioned by the sliding down of the hinder parts of the Yökul into the low space that had been occupied by the vast collection of water previous to its having rushed into the icy caverns in the interior of the mountain, from which it has again been emptied into the plain. This supposition is confirmed by the circumstance of the retrogression happening immediately after the mountain ceases to protrude, and it has discharged itself of the immense surplus of water with which it was glutted; and is rendered still more probable by the consideration, that the foundations of the Yökul must be entirely disengaged by its progress, so that no obstacle can be presented from that quarter to impede its return to its former situation. The undulatory motions observable during its lesser convulsions, seem to arise from the violence with which the water forces its way through the internal caverns, just as its breaking out and disappearing again, almost the same moment, must be occasioned by the falling in of the caverns in the vicinity of the margin. That it was convulsed during the eruption of the adjacent volcano was a necessary consequence of the deluge of hot water that mountain poured forth, as there was no other way for it to make its escape than the low ground occupied by the moveable Yökul; but that its movements are dependent on volcanic eruptions, is contradicted by the fact that it has both advanced and retired during the period the volcanoes have been in a state of

inactivity. Whether the sparks of fire said to have been seen above it * did not originate in the volcano behind, may justly be doubted, as it is certain the account of the playing of flames in the middle of the fresh water lake *Grimsvötn*, during the eruptions of the *Northern Skeiderâ Yökul*, † is wholly fabulous; or the sparks may have been produced by the violent collision of certain mineral bodies confined within the masses of the Yökul when these were torn and convulsed by the fury of the water below. The phenomena of these vacillating Yökuls would receive much elucidation, from a survey of the situation and appearance of those parts of them which lie towards the interior of the island; but the dangers connected with every attempt to explore them, are more than sufficient to damp the zeal, and check the enterprise, of the most impassioned lovers of natural history. ‡

At the western extremity of the sand we came to several rivers, that are known by the general name of *Gnupsvötn*, some of which we found still more formidable than the *Skeiderâ*. These rivers are defended on the right by the long narrow mountain *Lomagnupr*, which projects into the sand, and bears every mark of its having been a promontory in former times. It is at least 1500 feet high, and is composed of rough brown tuffa, in the matrix of which is imbedded an infinite number of small pointed stones of a bluish colour, which I take to be pieces of basalt. Of this stone I saw some fine pentagonal specimens at the base of the mountain, but, owing to the gloom which the shadows of evening had

* See Olafsen's og Povelsen's Reise, p. 780. † Ibid.

‡ Before leaving the subject of the moveable ice-fields in Iceland, I cannot but lay before the reader the following short account of a similar field in the valley of *Justedal* in *Norway*: "The situation and appearance of this field of ice are very variable. Sometimes it continues to protrude into the vallies near it for the period of from thirty to sixty years, and again recedes for a time. When it moves forward, it cracks to the depth of several thousand feet; and when it returns back to its original position, the rents are all closed up, as if the mass had never been split. In its progress it has such a force, that it pushes before it stones or rocks, as large as houses; and should they happen to get jammed in between the ice and an adjoining mountain, they are crushed to pieces as it passes. On receding, it leaves behind it a sterile, dry, and sandy soil, on which no grass will ever afterwards grow." BOMARE's *Nat. Hist. Kiöb.* 1769, vol. iv. p. 60, 61.

already cast on its sides, it was impossible to discover their original bed.

We here proceeded with considerable difficulty, being directly above the river; and the track lying across large heaps of small stones that had been washed down by the torrents, had no solid foundation, but threatened, at every step, to give way, and plunge us into the raging flood, from which there was not the least possibility of extrication. Turning round the extremity of the mountain, which hangs almost directly over head, and resembles a vast square tower, at the angle of two ranges of ancient buildings, we fell in with numerous heaps of stones, and immensely huge masses of tuffa, which have been severed from the mountain, and hurled down into the plain, during the rockings occasioned by an earthquake in 1789. We now crossed a tract of lava, called from its colour "the Brown Lava," which, as no mention is made of the circumstance in the ancient annals, is supposed to have flowed previous to the occupation of the island; and passing the farms of *Gnúpstadr* and *Raudaleirg*, we forded the *Diupá*, a river of considerable breadth, the bottom of which is full of large stones, so that its passage is attended both with difficulty and danger; and arrived, about ten o'clock at night, at the parsonage of *Kálfafell*, where I was kindly received by the clergyman, Sira Jon Jonson, and pitched my tent a little to the south of the church.

The parish of *Fliotshverfi*, of which Sira Jon is minister, contains only a population of about seventy souls; the tract having been much injured by the volcanic eruptions described in the following Chapter; yet, among that number of people, there only existed one Bible, besides the copy belonging to the church. They had long uttered complaints of the want of the sacred oracles; but as there was no appearance of any supply, they had ultimately given up all hopes of ever seeing them more. Sira Jon is between fifty and sixty years of age, and appears to have more life and activity in religious concerns than many of his brethren. The exertions of the Bible Societies commanded his admiration, and excited the liveliest emotions of gratitude and praise.

CHAP. VII.

West Skaftafell's Syssel—Skaftâr Volcano—Eruption of 1783 described—Sida—Hörgland Hospital—Icelandic Leprosy—Kyrkiuba—Basalts—Landbrot—Passage of the Kudafliot—Thyckvabæ—Myrdals-sand—Wild Corn—Kötlugiâr Volcano—Its Eruptions described—Vik—Hafursâ—Narrow escape.

The two subdivisions of *Skaftafell's Syssel* are separated from each other by the *Gnupsvötn*, and the traveller, on passing that boundary, leaves the regions of perpetual ice and snow, and enters a tract, which, though greatly defaced by the terrible convulsions of nature to which the last century was witness in this neighbourhood, still exhibits ample specimens of that beauty and fertility for which it has been renowned. The *Northern Skeidarâ* and *Skaptâr Vökuls* lie at a considerable distance back from the farms; and the low flat hills which occupy the intermediate space, while they screen the inhabitants from the cold northern blasts of winter, afford their flocks and herds a pretty luxuriant pasturage. The numerous cottages that line the base of the hills, the rich vegetation which clothes nearly two-thirds of the declivity; and the beautiful basaltic pillars appearing among the cliffs above, the tops of which are met by the descending heath: all combine to render the districts of *Sida* and *Fliotshverfi* the most delightful of any in Iceland. The latter district, however, which is the most easterly, has been exposed to two sad disasters since the middle of last century. In 1753, an eruption of the *Northern Skeidarâ Vökul* took place, which, overcharging the *Diupá*, (Deep River,) it not only overflowed its banks, but gave rise to a new tor-

rent, the consequence of which was, that the heath was deluged, and a considerable part of the grounds belonging to the glebe of *Kalfafell* greatly damaged by the pieces of ice, stones, and gravel, which were deposited on them by the water. The other rivers to the westward also overflowed their banks, and the ashes and pumice, carried in that direction by a north-east wind, laid waste for some time what the deluge had spared, and occasioned the death of a number of cattle. The fire-spouts, and cloud of smoke, were distinctly seen from the hills in the vicinity, but no lava was known to flow down from the Yökul. *

The eruption that took place in the year 1783 was of a very different description. It not only appears to have been more tremendous in its phenomena than any recorded in the modern annals of Iceland, but it was followed by a train of consequences the most direful and melancholy, some of which continue to be felt to this day. Immense floods of red-hot lava were poured down from the hills with amazing velocity, and, spreading over the low country, burnt up men, cattle, churches, houses, and every thing they attacked in their progress. Not only was all vegetation, in the immediate neighbourhood of the volcano, destroyed by the ashes, brimstone, and pumice, which it emitted; but, being borne up to an inconceivable height in the atmosphere, they were scattered over the whole island, impregnating the air with noxious vapours, intercepting the genial rays of the sun, and empoisoning whatever could satisfy the hunger or quench the thirst of man and beast. Even in some of the more distant districts, the quantity of ashes that fell was so great, that they were gathered up by handfuls. Upwards of four hundred people were instantly deprived of a home; the fish were driven from the coasts, and the elements seemed to vie with each other which should commit the greatest depredations; famine and pestilence stalked abroad, and cut down their victims with ruthless cruelty; while death himself was glutted with the prey. In some houses there was scarcely a

* Olafsen og Povelsen ut sup. p. 770.

sound individual left to tend the afflicted, or any who possessed sufficient strength to inter the dead. The most miserably emaciated tottering skeletons were seen in every quarter. When the animals that had died of hunger and disease were consumed, the wretched creatures had nothing to eat but raw hides, and old pieces of leather and ropes, which they boiled and devoured with avidity. The horses ate the flesh off one another, and for want of other sustenance had recourse to turf, wood, and even excrementitious substances; while the sheep devoured each other's wool. In a word, the accumulation of miseries, originating in the volcanic eruption, was so dreadful, that, in the short space of two years, not fewer than 9,336 human beings, 28,000 horses, 11,461 head of cattle, and 190,488 sheep perished on the island! *

About a month previous to the commencement of the eruption, a submarine volcano burst forth at the distance of nearly seventy miles in a south-west direction from *Cape Reykianess* in *Guldbringe Syssel*, and ejected such an immense quantity of pumice, that the surface of the ocean was covered with it to the distance of a hundred and fifty miles, and the spring ships considerably impeded in their course. As they approached the place, they found that a new island had been thrown up, consisting of high cliffs, within which the fire was in violent action, and emitting smoke and pumice from two or three different places. The island was claimed by his Danish Majesty, who denominated it *Nyöe*, or the New Island; but ere a year had elapsed, the sea resumed her ancient dominion, and the island has never been seen since. A concealed rock, however, was discovered at the same time, almost in a direct line between the site of the volcano, and the chain of rocks called *Fugle Skieren*, which have anciently been thrown up in a similar manner.

The *Skaptár* volcano, so called from the river of the same name, down which the greater part of the lava was poured, is situated close to the eastern boundary of *West Skaftafill's*

* See "Iceland in the Eighteenth Century," Pp. 27—29; and "An Account of the Eruption," Copenhagen, 1785, 8vo, both written by Chief-Justice Stephensen.

Syssel, about thirty-two British miles due north of *Kyrkiubœr Abbey*, and near the contiguous sources of the rivers *Tûnâ*, *Skaptâ*, and *Hverfisfliot*. It lies principally in the valley called *Varmârdal*, and consists of about twenty red conical hills, stretching in nearly a direct line from E. N. E. to W. S. W. which have served as so many furnaces, from which the melted matter has been discharged into the valley. From these craters the lava has flowed which inundated the low country, through the channel of the *Skaptâ*. What flowed down the *Hverfisfliot*, has had its source in some other craters situated farther to the north-east, but which are evidently connected with the former hills, and would, in all probability, have poured their contents down *Varmardal*, had it not been completely filled with the lava, which had already been emptied into it.

None of the Icelandic annals make mention of any preceding eruption from this volcano; yet, if we may judge from the situation of the ancient lavas, that are to be met with both in the inhabited and uninhabited parts of the vicinity, it is likely they have flowed from the same source at some remote period. Nor is it at all improbable, that the eruption of water which inundated the same tract, exactly thirty years before the recent catastrophe happened, had its origin in the subterraneous channels connecting with this very volcano, though it may not have been thrown up from the identical craters. But why stop at probabilities? The *Northern Skeidarâ*, *Sida*, and *Skaptâr Vökuls*, are only different designations of the same ice mountain, according to its different projections or aspects; and if it be allowable to speak of the eruptions of *Öræfa* in 1362 and 1727 as proceeding from the same mountain, though there be a distance of several miles between the craters, it seems still more proper to view the Vökuls just mentioned as one general volcano, whose foundations are cracked by the powerful action of subterraneous fire, which makes a passage for itself, now in this quarter, and now in that, according to the situation and quantity of the combustible matters by which it is fed, and the facility with which it reaches the surface of the earth.

From the 1st to the 8th of June, 1783, the inhabitants of *West Skaftafell's Syssel* were alarmed by repeated shocks of an earthquake, which, as they daily increased in violence, left no reason to doubt that some dreadful volcanic explosion was about to take place. Pitching tents in the open fields, they deserted their houses, and awaited, in awful suspense, the issue of these terrifying prognostics. On the morning of the 8th, a prodigious cloud of dense smoke darkened the atmosphere, and was observed to be continually augmented by fresh columns arising from behind the low hills, along the southern base of which, the farms, constituting the parish of *Sida*, are situated. A strong south wind prevented the cloud from advancing over the farms; but the heath, or common, lying between them and the volcano, was completely covered with ashes, pumice, and brimstone. The eruption had now actually commenced; and the raging fire, as if sublimated into greater fury by the vent it had obtained, occasioned more dreadful tremefactions, accompanied by loud subterraneous reports, while the sulphureous substances that filled the air, breaking forth into flames, produced, as it were, one continued flash of lightning, with the most tremendous peals of thunder that ever were heard. The extreme degree to which the earth in the vicinity of the volcano was heated, melted an immense quantity of ice, and caused a great overflow in all the rivers originating in that quarter.

Upon the 10th, the flames first became visible. Vast fire-spouts were seen rushing up amid the volumes of smoke, and the torrent of lava that was thrown up, flowing in a south-west direction, through the valley called *Ulfarsdal*, till it reached the river *Skaftâ*, when a violent contention between the two opposite elements ensued, attended with the escape of an amazing quantity of steam; but the fiery current ultimately prevailed, and, forcing itself across the channel of the river, completely dried it up in less than twenty-four hours; so that, on the 11th, the *Skaptâ*, could be crossed in the low-country on foot, at those places where it was only possible before to pass it in boats. The cause of

its desiccation soon became apparent: for the lava, having collected in the channel, which lies between high rocks, and is in many places from 400 to 600 feet in depth, and near 200 in breath, not only filled it up to the brink, but overflowed the adjacent fields to a considerable extent; and, pursuing the course of the river with great velocity, the dreadful torrent of red-hot melted matter approached the farms on both sides, greatly damaged those of *Hvammur* and *Svinadal* to the west, and that of *Skaptârdal* to the east; laid waste the two tenantries of *Svartinupar* and *Litlancs*, belonging to the church of *Búland*, which it also damaged, and, by the evening of the 12th, it had advanced to *A*, when it instantly overflowed the houses, pasture-grounds, and meadows, together with the greater part of the common. In the mean time, the thunder, lightning, and subterraneous concussions were continued, with little or no intermission; and besides the crackling of the rocks and earth, which the lava burnt in its progress, the ears of the inhabitants were stunned by the tremendous roar of the volcano, which resembled that of a large caldron in the most violent state of ebullition, or the noise of a number of massy bellows, blowing with full power into the same furnace.

On gaining the outlet, by which the hills that confine the channel of the *Skaptâ* open into the plain, it might naturally have been supposed, that the burning flood would at once have deluged the low fields of *Medalland*, which lay directly before it; but, contrary to all expectation, it was arrested for some time, by an immense unfathomed abyss in the bed of the river, into which it emptied itself with a great noise. When this chasm was filled, the lava, augmented by fresh effusions, rose to a prodigious height, and breaking over the masses that had cooled, it at length proceeded southwards across the plain. In the night between the 14th and 15th, its western edge overran the farm of *Nes* in *Skaptârtunga*, which it entirely consumed, with all its grounds and woodlands. The main current now struck off towards the east, and ran close past the farms of *Skal* and *Hollt*, before which it stopped a few days; but had, in the mean-

time burnt up the wood of *Brandaland* belonging to *Kyrkiubæ Abbey*. The torrents that continued to be poured down, proceeded slowly over the tract of ancient lava to the south and south-west of *Skâl*, and setting fire to the melted substances, they underwent a fresh fusion, and were heaved up to a considerable elevation. It also rushed into the subterraneous caverns, and during its progress under-ground, it threw up the crust either to the side, or to a great height in the air. In such places, as it proceeded below a thick indurated crust, where there was no vent for the steam, the surface was burst in pieces, and thrown up with the utmost violence and noise to the height of near 180 feet.

On the 18th, another dreadful ejection of liquid and red hot lava proceeded from the volcano, which now entirely covered the rocks that had towered above the reach of the former floods, during their progress through the channel of the *Skaptâ*, and flowed down with amazing velocity and force over the masses that were cooling, so that the one stream was literally heaped above the other. Masses of flaming rock were seen swimming in the lava. The water that had been dammed up on both sides of its course, was thrown into a violent state of ebullition, and overflowing its boundaries, it did great damage to the grounds of *Svinadal* and *Hvammur*, which farms had already been attacked by the edge of the lava, as also to the underwood of *Skaptârdal* on the east.

Continuing its progress the following day, the lava divided into two streams, one of which flowed with the same velocity as the day before due south, along the river *Melgvisl* into *Medalland*; while the other took an easterly direction over the parish of *Sida*, burning the tract about *Skâlarstapa*, and running with inconceivable force from thence to *Skálarfiall*, by which it was prevented from spreading further north. But, rising on the hill, it rolled up the soil before it, and approached within 120 feet of the church and houses of *Skâl*, and overran the whole tract between that place and *Holl*. As *Skâl* had now escaped the fury of two successive floods of lava, sanguine hopes were entertained of

its safety; but a great quantity of rain having fallen on the 21st, and swelled the water already dammed up in the valley, the church, the parsonage, and outhouses, were completely overflowed; and the whole tract was observed, the following morning, to be covered with water in a state of violent ebullition. The western branch having pursued its course along the channel of the *Melquisl*, and spread itself to a great extent on both sides, crossed the river *Steinsmyrarfliot*, and burnt up the church of *Holmasel*, with all its houses and grounds, together with the farm of *Holmâr* on the opposite side of the river. Following the *fliot*, it advanced close to the farm of *Efri-Steinsmyri*, and greatly spoiled its grass-lands: from thence it inclined towards the south, passing *Sydri-Steinsmyri*, a farm consisting of five separate dwelling-houses, and stopped about 1800 feet from the most northerly, without doing any material injury to the farm. The western edge of this branch spread itself, at the same time, across the river *Fedgaquisl*, and overran the farms of *Sydri* and *Efri-Fliota*, with the houses and neighbouring grounds, burnt up *Botnar*, and laid the greatest part of the farm of *Hnausar* under water.

From the 22d of June to the 13th of July fresh eruptions took place at intervals, and the lava being impelled forward over the floods and tracts that had attained to some degree of solidity, the mass was raised higher and higher; and making its escape, at length, by three or four different channels, the fiery stream rushed on to finish the work of devastation. The farm of *Nes*, with its houses, meadows, and the most of its pasturage; all the meadows, commons, and wild-corn fields belonging to the glebe of *Asar*; and the greatest part of the meadows, with part of the adjacent grounds and commons of *Ytri-Asar*,—all became a prey to the flaming flood. Happily the priest saved the most of his effects, with all the ornaments and documents belonging to the church, and betook himself to the western parts of the Syssel. From these farms it proceeded across the low lands towards the south, till it fell in with the *Kudafliot*; and, after running for some time along its eastern margin, it stopped to the north of the

farm *Leidvöllr:* while the rest flowed a little to the east of this farm till it came close to *Stadarhollt*, whence it flowed eastward towards *Hnausar*, where it also stopped. Meanwhile, one of the branches that had run in an easterly direction, destroyed the wild corn sands in the *Landbrot;* and the other, skirting the *Sida* hills, on the 2d of July, broke into the valley, at the upper end of which *Skâl* was situated, and at last completed its desolation, by covering the church and all the houses with lava. The farm of *Hollt* was next attacked, and its houses, with the meadows and excellent pasture grounds belonging to them, were totally destroyed. Pursuing an easterly course, it followed the channel of the *Skaptâ* for several days, completely stopped up the river *Fiadrâ*, and was poured down a prodigious cataract called *Stapafoss*, where it totally filled the profound abyss which that cataract had been making for ages. It now overflowed *Dalbær* in the *Landbrot*, with all its houses; damaged at the same time the farms *Heidi* and *Hunkurbacka;* and after spoiling part of *Holmur*, the eastern arm of the lava was arrested on the 20th of July, near the high rock *Systrastapi*, about a mile to the west of *Kyrkiubœ Abbey.*

While these awful devastations were going forward in the divisions of *Skaptârtunga*, *Medalland*, *Landbrot*, and *Sida*, the only inconveniences felt by the inhabitants of *Fliotshverfi*, were the destruction of vegetation by the showers of red hot stones and ashes which fell upon it, and the impregnation of the atmosphere and water with mephitic substances. They had, indeed, twice been enveloped in almost total darkness, especially on the 28th of June, when it was so thick, that it was scarcely possible, at noon day, to distinguish a sheet of white paper, held up at the window, from the blackness of the wall on either side; but they flattered themselves in the hope, that the lava would soon all be ejected, and, at all events, that it would continue to flow in the direction it had originally taken. However, on the 3d of August, they were alarmed by a quantity of smoke, which they observed arising out of the river *Hvœrfisfliot;* and, as the heat, which was also found to be in the water, daily increased, till at last the

river was totally dried up, they concluded, that the same destruction was about to be poured down upon them, which had overwhelmed the parishes to the west.

Nor were their apprehensions without foundation; for the floods of lava having entirely choked up the *Skaptâ*, and all the low channels to the west and north of the volcano, it was forced to assume a new course, and running in a south-east direction between mount *Blængur* and *Hverfisfiot*, it was discharged at length into that river, which occasioned vast volumes of steam and smoke to arise from that quarter, attended with dreadful noises and lightnings. The burning flood now ran down the empty channel, and, filling it to the brink, overflowed the low grounds on both sides; and, by the evening of the 9th, it had not only reached the outlet into the open and level country, but, in the course of a few hours, had spread itself to the distance of nearly six miles across the plain, and stopped up the road between *Fliots-hverfi* and *Sida*. The volcano still continuing to send forth fresh supplies of lava, the red hot flood spread itself wider and wider, and in its progress destroyed the farms of *Eystra-dal* and *Thverârdal*, the houses, meadows, and neighbouring grounds of which are so completely covered, that the spot where they lay is no longer visible. It also did considerable injury to the farms *Sclialand* and *Thverâ*, and obliged their inhabitants, as well as the whole parish of *Kâl-fafell*, to flee for their safety; yet the above-mentioned were the only houses it burnt. Though this branch ceased to extend over the low country after the end of August, quantities of fresh lava continued still to be thrown up out of the volcano, and a new eruption is said to have taken place so late as the month of February 1784, during the greater part of which year columns of smoke were observed to ascend from many parts in the lava, and it had not quite cooled for nearly two years after the eruptions were over. *

With respect to the dimensions of the lava, its utmost

* When Mr Paulson visited this tract in the year 1794, he found a column of smoke still rising from certain parts of the lava; and some of the rents were filled with hot water.

length from the volcano, along the channel of the *Skaptâ*, down to *Ilnausar* in *Medalland*, is about fifty miles, and its greatest breadth in the low country between twelve and fifteen miles; the *Hverfisfliot* branch may be about forty miles in length, and seven at its utmost breadth. Its height in the level country does not exceed an hundred feet, but in some parts of the *Skaptâ* channel it is not less than six hundred feet high.*

Such were the phenomena of this dreadful volcanic eruption. Its consequences have already been detailed. The quantity of ashes, brimstone, &c. thrown up into the atmosphere was so great, that nearly the whole European horizon was enveloped in obscurity. Salso-sulphureous rains fell in several countries of the north. In the Faroe Islands, the ground was at times almost entirely covered with sand, ashes, and pumice; and luminous meteors were observed in *England*, *Holland*, and other parts of the Continent. It is to these, and the tremendous earthquakes felt the same year in different parts, that Cowper alludes in the second book of his Task:

> "Fires from beneath, and meteors from above,
> Portentous, unexampled, unexplained,
> Have kindled beacons in the skies; and the old
> And crazy earth has had her shaking fits
> More frequent, and foregone her usual rest.
> Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
> And pillars of our planet seem to fail,
> And nature, with a dim and sickly eye,
> To wait the close of all?"

The contemplation of so tremendous an event is certainly calculated to produce a train of serious thought in every reflecting mind. While the sceptical speculatist pronounces it to be absolutely incompatible with the infinite wisdom and benevolence of a Supreme Superintending Intelligence, the

* Chief Justice Stephenson's description of the Eruption of 1783, altered according to Mr Paulson's MS.

more experienced and modest naturalist, not only concludes *a priori*, from the skill and fitness discoverable in the general constitution and course of things, that such apparent disorders and irregularities must be conducive to the good of the universal system, but offers very probable proofs of the benefical tendency of volcanic eruptions, as affording a partial vent to those inflammable substances, which, however necessary as component parts of the terrestrial globe, would, if allowed to accumulate in particular places, ultimately burst forth with such inconceivable violence, that its crust would be shattered to pieces, or at least all that inhabits, beautifies, and adorns its surface, involved in one scene of undistinguishable ruin. The Christian, too, not satisfied with merely tracing the concatenation of natural causes and effects, but believing an established connection to exist between the physical and moral governments of God, is anxious to ascertain the spiritual ends these extraordinary phenomena are designed to answer, and make the improvement which they so loudly suggest. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Yet he is glorious in holiness, fearful in the manifestations of his attributes, and wonderful in all his operations. At his rebuke the foundations of the world are discovered. The earth shaketh and trembleth: the foundations of heaven move and shake because of his anger.

"What then!—were they the wicked above all,
And we the righteous, whose fast-anchored isle
Moved not, while their's was rocked, like a light skiff,
The sport of every wave? No: none are clear,
And none than we more guilty. But, where all
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
Of wrath obnoxious, God may choose his mark:
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If he spared not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine escape,
Far guiltier England, lest he spare not thee!"

COWPER.

On the 11th of September, about eleven in the forenoon, I took my departure from *Kâlfafell*, and proceeded on to the division of *Sida*. Previous to the eruption, the road lay straight west along the foot of the hills; but the eastern branch of the lava is so cavernous and rugged, that it can scarcely be crossed on foot, and the traveller is now obliged to go entirely round the tract which it occupies, and has thus to add, at least, twelve miles to his journey. The *Hverfisfliot* again flows among the lava, and from the difficulty I found in fording it, a little below its egress, it would appear that it has not lost any thing by its desiccation. It is not only extremely broad, but deep, and the bottom is so soft that the horses sink at every step. The son of the clergyman, who did me the favour to accompany me, and whom I found an intelligent well-informed young man, rode first into the stream, and desired me to ride after the baggage-horses; which I found to be an excellent plan, as by that means my horse walked on a more indurated soil. The lava is for the most part black, like that near *Myvatn*, but in some parts it approaches to a dark grey, and is more strongly vitrified. The crust is strangely heaved up and cracked, and in many places a great quantity of rough slag is attached to it.

Having skirted the margin of the lava for more than four hours, surrounded on every side by the blackest and most melancholy gloom, we at last reached *Sida*, the farm-houses and grounds of which presented a very different prospect to our view. Close to the most easterly farm, a beautiful cascade is poured over the brow of the hill, and, on the banks of the river, which is formed by its water, are superb ranges of basaltic pillars, which are so strikingly artificial in their construction, that they have received the name of "The Elfin Chambers." The verdure of the sloping pasture-grounds, and the number of the sheep and cattle that were browsing on them, produced a very pleasing effect on the mind.

A little to the west of this place, we came to *Hörgland* hospital, one of the four establishments existing on the island,

for the reception of incurable lepers, where I had an opportunity of contemplating that loathsome disease, so particularly described in the Levitical code, and which gave occasion to the composition of one of the most sublime pieces of Hebrew poetry that is to be met with in the sacred volume.*

* The assertions of Manetho, an ancient Egyptian writer, so eagerly received by the abettors of infidelity, that the whole Hebrew nation was infected with the leprosy, and that this was the cause of their expulsion from the land of Egypt, are ably refuted by Josephus, in his work against Appion, I. 29; and are rejected, even by Toland himself, as destitute of probability. That numerous cases of leprous affection, however, existed in a community of more than two millions of people at the time of their leaving the original seat of the disease, is not at all unlikely; and the particularity and minutiæ of the regulations prescribed by Moses, not only display a laudable solicitude for preventing the progress of this formidable evil, but discover a considerable knowledge of medical science, and shew that he had also made proficiency in this department during his residence at the Egyptian court. In the thirteenth chapter of Leviticus, he specifies different eruptions of the skin, the appearance of which rendered the subject suspected of the leprosy, and lays down a number of determinate rules, according to which a judgment was to be formed, whether the appearances in question were infallible symptoms of that malady, or mere innocuous tumours and pimples. These suspicious spots are: 1. שאת *seêth*, which the LXX. render ουλη, a tumour or lentiginous appearance; verse 2. 10. 19. 43.—2. ספחת *sapahhath*, a furfuraceous tetter, which, though not always, yet, as it was generally a precursor of the leprosy, the LXX. have given it by σημασια, a mark or sign, verse 2. 6, 7, 8.—3. בהרת *bohereth*, LXX. τηλαυγης, a whitish glossy scurf, answering to the αλφος λευκος of the Greeks, and the *morphea alba* of the middle ages, verse 2, &c.—4. שחין *shehin*, LXX. ἑλκος, an ulcer, or inflammatory botch, verse 18. מכות אש *michvathêsh*, LXX. κατακαυμα πυρος, a sore arising from an actual burn, verse 24, &c. and lastly, a נבע *nega*, or bruise on the head, or beard, causing a tenuity of hair, verse 29, &c. These different pustules, and blemishes, the priests were enjoined to examine with the utmost care; and should they be attended with any of the following symptoms, they were to be regarded as certain indications of the leprosy:—

1. The change of colour in the hair from black, which is the prevailing colour in the east, to white or yellow, while at the same time a tenuity ensued, verse 3 and 30.

2. The depth of the suspected pustule. If it only existed in the cuticle or outer skin, it was pronounced innocuous, but if it appeared to fret, or penetrate deeper, it was considered to be an infallible prelude, verse 4. 20. 25, 26. 30. 34.

3. Its growth or luxuriance. While it continued stationary, and manifested no signs of increase or extension, there was reason to hope it was harmless; yet this was not sufficient to do away all suspicion: the individual was ordered to be confined, during two periods of seven days each, and if no change took place

Two females were at this time in the hospital, the one about thirty, and the other upwards of fifty years of age. The latter of these objects exhibited the most miserable spectacle I ever beheld. Her face and hands were swelled to a frightful degree, and full of livid red sores or botches, between

before that time was expired, he was to be declared clean; the eruption being merely (מִסְפַּחַת *mispahhath*,) a morphew or dry scab, verse 6. 8. 22, &c.

4. Its exhibition of red or living flesh. This was viewed as a symptom of an advanced state of leprosy, verse 9. 17. If the wound of an ulcer, or burn, assumed a whitish colour, verging to red (לְבָנָה אַדְמַדֶּמֶת *lebhanah adamdameth*,) it was also an infallible symptom: but if it became pallid, or dark, there was no further ground of suspicion, verse 26, &c. The obscure white spots, mentioned verse 39, are declared to be innocuous, forming a species of eruption, there called בֹּהַק *bohak*, and which, according to Niebuhr and Forskal, still prevails among the Arabs, who give it the same name, and neither consider it to be contagious nor mortal. They do not even scruple to lie with the person that has it.

As no notice is taken by Moses of the anæsthesia, which is an inseparable attendant of the genuine Elephantiasis, it has, after all, been doubted whether this be the identical malady he is here guarding against: but to this it has been replied, that insensibility does not take place in the very first stages of the distemper; and as Moses had no intention of giving a medical description of all its characters, there was no occasion for his mentioning a sign which did not exist till it had made some degree of progress. Besides, as it was an easy matter for such as wished to conceal the leprosy, to feign sensibility, the publication of the symptom in question would, in a great measure, have defeated the end of his political regulations on this head.

It is evident, not only from the name given to the disease, but also from the complaints uttered by Job, and the general strain of the arguments used by his friends, that that pious man was afflicted with the elephantiasis, or the worst kind of Oriental leprosy. In chap. ii. 7. it is called שְׁחִין רָע *shehin rá*, a malignant ulceration: and as this disease was both dreadful in its symptoms, and incurable, it was viewed by the ancients as a peculiar punishment inflicted by God on such as were guilty of some flagrant act of wickedness. Hence its Hebrew name נֶגַע צָרַעַת *nega tzeraath*, "The stroke of the scourge." Hence, Job's wife, viewing his recovery as impossible, bids him bless God and die. His being unable to make any farther use of his fingers, ii. 8; the corroded, stiff, cloddy, cracked, and loathsome state of his skin, vii. 5. xiii. 26. xvi. 8, 16. xix. 20; the fœtidness of his breath, xvii. 1. xix. 17; the gloominess of his looks, xvi. 16; the pain in his bones, xxx. 17; his wearisome nights, vii. 3, 4; terrific dreams, ver. 14; his wishing for death, vi. 8—10. vii. 15, 16. x. 1; and his being shunned by his intimate friends and relations, xix. 13—16; these, and other characters which might be collected from this poem, all shew that he was afflicted with the Arabian leprosy. Nor must I omit mentioning the coincidence, that one of the Hexaplar versions actually has ἐλεφαντ., the elephan-

which appeared scars or rents, resembling cuts in a high state of inflammation. The other seemed to be affected with a less malignant species of the same malady: for though her face was also swelled, no pustules appeared; but the skin was covered with whitish glossy scales, and in some places intersected by reddish streaks, which are most probably a disposition to wrinkles. They were both sitting in the door of the Lazar-house, and the deepest melancholy seemed depicted in their looks.

It is now generally agreed among physicians, that the Icelandic leprosy is the legitimate *Elephantiasis*, or *Lepra Arabum*, one of the most Herculean distempers ever employed as scourges to the human race. In its primary stages, its symptoms are inconsiderable, and very ambiguous. A small reddish spot, scarcely larger than the point of a needle, breaks out at first about the forehead, nose, corner of the eyes, and the lips; and, in proportion as it increases, other pustules make their appearance on the breast, arms, armpits, &c. which generally dry up in one place and break out in another without pain, till the disease has considerably advanced, when they cover almost the whole body, give the skin a scabrous appearance, stiffen it, and terminate sometimes in shining scales, which fall off like dust, sometimes in malignant tumours and swellings. The patient, in the mean time, labours under lassitude of body, anæsthesia, and lowness of spirits. When the malady becomes inveterate, the breath, which before was disagreeable, now gets intolerably fœtid; a strong unctuous matter is perspired; the hair, already changed in colour, falls off; the voice grows hoarse and nasal; and the face becomes terribly deformed. The look is wild and haggard; the pallid red colour of the body is only relieved by the most disgusting ulcers, which, becoming deeper, putrid, and virulent, not only affect the bones and joints, but, as they spread over the

tiasis, Job ii. 7; as also that this disease still exists about Damascus, in the vicinity of which Job is supposed to have lived. The author of the ancient Norwegian work, intituled, "The Royal Mirror," says expressly, that Job was smitten with "ögurligri likthrá," a terrible leprosy.

skin, deep ravines are formed, which give it an elephantine appearance, whence the name elephantiasis. The fingers get quite stiff and crooked, and the nails and other parts of the body fall off by degrees. During the night, the patient is harassed with terrible dreams, and he is oppressed by day with a tedious melancholy, in which he is often tempted to make away with himself. He gradually surrenders one part of his body after another to the insatiate malady; and at length death, the long wished-for deliverer, comes suddenly and puts an end to his misery. *

As the leprosy is infectious, almost every person shuns the company of the sufferer, which must greatly add to the misery of his situation; nor can he flatter himself, after the distemper has advanced to a certain degree, with any hopes of relief from medical assistance. It is considered to be irregularly hereditary; yet the symptoms do not become visible before the person has reached the years of maturity. In cases of infection too, it generally happens that three or four years elapse before any eruption breaks out in the skin. It then proceeds with slow but steady progress, and it is possible for the person who is afflicted with it, to drag out a wretched existence to the protracted term of fifty or sixty years. Very emphatically have the inhabitants of the East given this disease, among other significatory designations, the name of "The First-born of Death." Nor is the Icelandic "Likthrâ" scarcely less striking. It properly signifies a rancid, putrefying corpse, than which there is nothing a person inveterately affected with the leprosy more perfectly resembles.

The origin of this dreadful malady has been traced to Egypt, where it still exists, as also in Arabia, Morocco, China, Tartary, some parts of Russia and Sweden, the sea-coasts of Norway, the West Indian and Feroe Islands, and Iceland. It was first transported by the Phœnicians into Greece:

* Giesleseri de Elephantiasis Norvegica, and Schilling de lepra in Michaelis' Orient. und Exeget. Biblioth. xvii. 1. and Neu. Orient. und Exeget. Biblioth. iii. 168. together with Henslers Geschichte des Abendländischen Aussatzes. and Jahn's Biblische Archäologie, 1 Theil, § 213.

it followed the Romans on their return from Asiatic conquest; and from the twelfth to near the end of the sixteenth century, it was the terror and scourge of Europe, into which it was introduced a second time by the Crusaders. What a mercy that we are now almost entirely freed from a disease whose victims were at one time so numerous in Europe, that every country in it was filled with hospitals for their reception!*

The leprosy prevails most in the south and west quarters of Iceland, which is to be ascribed to the inhabitants of these parts being mostly employed in fishing, the rancidity of their food, their wet woollen clothes, an insalubrious air, and their not paying due attention to habits of cleanliness. The four hospitals, one in each quarter, were established in the year 1652, as appears from two royal rescripts of that date, in virtue of which, four farms belonging to the crown were appropriated to that purpose; the supernumerary utensils and articles in the possession of the cloisters, were to be devoted to their establishment; and a privilege was granted, authorizing collections to be made, and certain fines and taxes to be appropriated for their maintenance. The managers were allowed a certain gratuity for their trouble, and were, besides, exempted from paying the common taxes.† These establishments have been subject to several changes since first instituted; and, at present, they are placed under the direction of the Stiftamptman and the Bishop, and enjoy only the fish-tax, which is collected in the following manner: On the first fishing-day after Easter, an equal share of the fish taken by all the six-oared boats, is appropriated to the hospital, except when the number of fish that is caught does not amount to five, in which case the hospital gets its share the following day. Considering the number that are afflicted with this evil, these establishments do not by any means appear adequate to their relief. It is seldom they receive more than eight lepers altogether; and, in the year

* Olahn. ut sup.

† Histor. Eccles. Island. Tom. III. Pp. 460, 461.

1785, not fewer than ninety-nine leprous persons were found in the diocese of *Skalholt.** What little funds they possessed, have been nearly annihilated by the recent depreciation of Danish currency.

Skirting the base of the hills, and fording the river *Geirlandsâ*, we arrived, about six o'clock, at the abbey of *Kyrkiubæ*, a place of great celebrity in the annals of Iceland. It would appear, from the Landnâmabok, that, previous to the arrival of the Norwegians, *Kyrkiuba* had been inhabited by *Papar*, or Irishmen, professing Christianity, on which account it was held in such sanctity, that it was deemed impossible for any idolater to live here.† It was, accordingly, taken possession of by a Norwegian, of the name of Ketell, who had received his education in the Hebrides, and was branded, for his attachment to the Christian religion, with the opprobrious appellation of *enn Fiflski*, the Foolish. Unmoved by the sneers of his heathen neighbours, this man adhered to the true religion; and, if we may judge from the conduct of his descendants, he must have taken great pains in instilling its principles into the minds of his children, for they walked in his footsteps for many generations. On the death of Ketell, his heirs and successors were expelled from *Kyrkiubæ* by Hilldir, the son of a neighbouring peasant, who, placing no faith in the supposed sanctity of the place, was determined to occupy it; but, it is told, that, on his approaching the wall of the *tûn*, he was instantly struck dead, which circumstance tended in no small degree to raise its repute. About the middle of the twelfth century, it was in the possession of a rich and learned priest, named Biarnhard, who, confirmed in his resolution by the advice of Klang, Bishop of *Skalholt*, erected a nunnery here, of the order of St Benedict, which was dedicated by said bishop in the year 1186, and continued to be governed by a series of twelve Abbesses till the Reformation, when it was secularized, and its possessions, which at that time amounted to no

* Island i det Attende Aarhundrede, p. 317.

† "Höfdo thar adur setit Papar ec eigi mâtto thar heidner menn bua." Part IV. cap. xi.

less than thirty-one farms, were annexed to the private domains of the King of Denmark. In the year 1542, Christian III. wrote to Halldora, the last abbess, ordering her to establish a school at the abbey, in which the youth in the vicinity might be taught to read and write, and be instructed in the principles of the Reformation; but the plan was never carried into effect. * At present it is rented by a Hreppstiori, and is still superior in appearance to any farm in the district. The church is also in good condition, having been lately repaired with the drift-wood which the sea deposits in great abundance on the coast. At the church-door is a Runic epitaph, hewn in a polished stone of blue basalt; but the characters are so obliterated, that the inscription is no longer intelligible. In the church-yard are numerous Icelandic epitaphs on the same kind of stone, several of which are composed by the clergyman's lady, who is said to possess some share of poetical talent.

A little to the east of *Kyrkiubæ* is one of the finest specimens of basaltic architecture I have ever beheld. It lies close to the road, in the middle of the sand, and forms nearly a perfect square, measuring twenty-five feet in length, by twenty in breadth. The pillars are all pentagonal, and are joined together in the most exact manner. The interstices between them are nicely filled up with a thin stratum of a yellowish colour, and about the eighth part of an inch in thickness, which, being edged in along the surface, as if done with a trowel, suggests at first sight the idea of mortar. On a closer survey, however, it evidently appears to be a natural cement that has run in a liquid state while the pillars were forming. Their greatest diameter is about nine inches. The surface, which is nearly level with the sand, is as smooth as pavement; and, having been bleached by the rains, wears a greyish aspect, which renders the spot very conspicuous, and is finely contrasted with the blackness of the surrounding sand. According to a tradition still current in the neighbourhood, these pillars were the foundation and

* Hist. Eccles. Island. Tom. IV. Pp. 77—82.

floor of a monastery at a very remote period; and indeed, considering the fact that Irish Christians once frequented the place, it is not altogether improbable, that, on their discovery of this bed of basalt, they may have erected a religious house on it, especially as it bore so striking a resemblance to the Giant's Causeway in their native country.

At an early hour on the 12th, I proceeded into the division called the *Landbrot*, which is separated from *Sida* by the *Skaptâ*, whose water again flows in part in the former channel, after having sought its way through the rents and cavities of the lava. Nearly the whole of this tract consists of lava, which must have flowed long before the occupation of the island, for it is covered, in most places, with a thick soil, and overgrown with grass. From the inequalities of the surface, and the deep chasms which every now and then make their appearance, it is evidently of the more cavernous lavas; yet, surprising as it may seem, a vast number of farms and hamlets are raised on this calcined and vaulted foundation. In many parts are large apertures in the middle of the pasture grounds, where the crust has lately given way; and, viewing the situation of the houses, it is impossible not to tremble for the safety of the inhabitants, since, in all probability, many of them are separated from a watery tomb only by a porous dome, not exceeding a foot or a foot and a half in thickness.

Passing *Arnardrângar*, a farm situated close to the margin of what seems to be a more recent lava, I came to *Efristeinsmyri*, where the new lava begins; and, skirting it for some time, I arrived at the *Eldvatn*, a broad river, or rather lake, which derives its name from its having broken forth subsequently to the late eruption, and appears to be the reservoir of the *Steinsmyrarfliot*, and several other inferior streams, whose course was changed by the progress of the lava. I should here, in all probability, have finished my pilgrimage, had not that God who had hitherto watched over me again interposed for my deliverance. At different distances in the water are long poles, which have been thrust in with a view to point out the proper fording-place; but, as their position

is only known to those who live in the neighbourhood, they are more apt to decoy a stranger into peril, than furnish him with a safe direction. Just as I was on the eve of entering the water, with the intention of crossing it above the poles, yet as close to them as possible, it was forded by a lad from the opposite side, who directed me to keep below the poles, as the bottom above them was full of deep holes and rents, and absolutely unfordable. I was now able to account for the shouting of the people at a farm I had passed, but who, as I did not give any heed to them, must have supposed I was acquainted with the danger.

Having got safely over, I rode on to *Hnausar*, the abode of Sira Jon Jonson, who immediately changed his clothes, and saddling his horse, accompanied me in order to guide me across the *Kudafliot*, the broadest river in Iceland.* By the way, our conversation naturally turned upon the situation of his parishioners with respect to the Scriptures; and I learned, with concern, that though his parish contains a population of more than 250 souls, not more than six families are in possession of a Bible. Before reaching the margin of the river, Sira Jon engaged a peasant in the vicinity to proceed with us, as he was not without apprehensions of danger. Like that of the *Hverfisfliot*, the bottom of the *Kudafliot* is full of uliginous matter, and, in many places, the water is so deep as nearly to cover the back of the horses. It took us a complete hour to ford it: having accomplished which, we crossed a pretty difficult morass, and, in the course of another hour, arrived at *Myrar*, where Sira Sigurdr Gisleson resides, and pitched my tent on a green spot behind the houses. The reception I met with was distinguishingly kind, and warm milk, the dish I always chose on my arrival at any place in the evening, was almost instantly served up to me.

Sira S. is a young man, has officiated some years as chaplain to the Archdeacon at *Gardè*, and has only lately been married, and removed to the living of *Thyckvabar*, the church

* On account of its size, this river has been called the *Nile* of Iceland.

and ancient monastery of which lie a little to the west of this place. The tract is called *Alftaver*, or "the Station of Swans," owing to the multitude of these fowls that frequented a lake in the vicinity in former times. The monastery was founded and dedicated in the year 1168. The monks were of the order of St Augustine, and were under the direction of a series of abbots, nineteen in number, till the Reformation. Brandr Jonson, the sixth in the series, was the most learned and indefatigable man of his day, and being in great favour with Magnus, King of Norway, that prince prevailed on him to translate into Icelandic, or to speak more properly, the Norse language, the history of Alexander the Great, and several other Roman authors, together with the famous work *Stiorn*,* which was long mistaken for the Bible, and of which a particular description will be found in the historical and critical view of the Icelandic Scriptures inserted in the Appendix. It is a remarkable fact, that in the parish of *Thyckvabar*, where, about the middle of the thirteenth century, the first attempts were made to translate the Bible into the vernacular language, not a single copy of the divine oracles should exist at the present day! Sira Sigurdr was extremely happy to find the wants of his parishioners would now be supplied, and assured me of his determination to point out to them the importance of reading the Scriptures, and to exhort such of them as were able, to purchase copies for themselves and their children.

From *Alftaver* and *Skaptârtunga*, which lies to the north, on the opposite side of the river, there is a road to the southern parts of the island, which, as it runs along the back of the mountains on the coast, has obtained the name of *Fiallabak*. By pursuing this route the traveller not only saves two days journey, but eludes the dangerous rivers which are poured forth from the Yökuls As it was necessary for me to be at *Eyrarbacka* or *Reykiavik* before the last of the ships sailed for *Copenhagen*, in order to write for more Bibles

* Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iv. p. 68

and New Testaments for the following year, I had some thoughts of following this track; but considering, on the other hand, that it lay through a totally uninhabited part of the country, and it being of importance that I should visit the Dean of *West Skaptafell's Syssel*, I preferred the common road. A little to the north of the *Fialla-bak* lies the *Torfa Vökul*, remarkable on account of the boiling springs which are situated in the midst of the ice, and send forth immense columns of steam into the atmosphere.*

About noon the following day I left *Myrar*, accompanied by the two clergymen, (Sira Jon having stopped all night,) both of whom insisted on proceeding with me to *Vik*; a circumstance which proved the more gratifying, as it gave rise to an interesting conversation relative to the importance of the work of the ministry, the responsibility attaching to the discharge of its functions, and the necessity of personal religion, and unremitting fervent prayer in order to any legitimate hopes of success. At a short distance from *Thyckvabæ* monastery, which is only distinguishable from the surrounding hamlets by its church, we entered *Myrdals-sand*, a desert tract, consisting for the most part of lava and ashes, which have been deposited on it by the neighbouring volcano of *Kötlugiâ*.

We here observed a number of people cutting the wild corn,† a vegetable which grows in different parts of the island, but nowhere more plentifully than among the sand and ashes which cover the grounds along the coast at this place. They cut it with a sickle considerably above the root, and, collecting it in small bundles, twenty of which form a *kerfi* or sheaf, they bind three sheaves together, and make what they call a *baggi*, one of which is placed on each side of a horse, and thus conveyed home, when they dry and thresh it (Iceland. *dusta*,) and then lay it up in heaps against the winter. The straw is used for thatching the houses. Having been dried in the *sofn* or kiln, the corn is ground,

* Olafsen's og Povelsen's Reise, p. 766.

† Arundo Arenaria. Iceland. *Melur*.

as it is needed, by hand-mills, the stones of which are usually made of lava; and these, with a few exceptions, are the only kind of mills on the island. They are generally wrought by two females, as in oriental countries, Matth. xxiv. 41. and are driven by a handle of wood fixed on an iron pivot near the circumference of the upper mill-stone. The work is very laborious, so that the women must constantly relieve each other; and as none but the lowest of the servants are employed in it, we may perceive the force of the prophet's address to the princely daughter of Babylon, "Take the mill-stones, and grind meal," Isaiah xlvii. 2. See also Exod. xi. 5. The Icelanders use the meal of the wild corn both for porridge and a kind of thin soft cakes, resembling the barley bannocks which are common among the Scotch peasantry. Their taste, though peculiar, I found by no means unpleasant. The meal is also made up into small lumps of dough, which are eaten in milk, and sometimes given to the shepherds, who eat it raw on the mountains, and are very fond of it. Several parishes are thus supplied with the spontaneous production of the sand; and the meal is held in such estimation, that it is sent to distant parts of the island, where it is deemed rare and delicious. *

The lava in *Myrdals-sand* is supposed to have flowed about the year 900, shortly after the tract was taken possession of by the Norwegians. We are told in the Landnâmabok, that Rafn Hafnarlykell, who inhabited *Dynskógum*, having a presentiment of the eruption, removed his dwelling to *Lágey*, where he was secure from danger. From the same annals, it appears, that the tract was beautiful and well inhabited before the eruption of the subterraneous fire; but that event compelled the settlers to flee west to *Höfdabrecka*, where they pitched their tents in a plain, called, from that circumstance, *Fialldavöllr*, but owing to the savage disposition of a smith of the name of Vemundr, they were obliged to decamp, and seek shelter farther west. † Crossing

* Olafsen og Povelsen, p. 8. 9—832.

† Landnâmabok, Part 4. cap. xii.

the lava, we had on the left hand the large triangular promontory of *Hiörleifshöfdi*, where Hiörleif, the companion of Ingolf, landed in the year 874, and being decoyed into a neighbouring wood by his Irish slaves, the following spring, in search of a bear, he was murdered by them, together with the rest of his company. The slaves, gathering his property together, fled to the *Vestmanna* islands; but were afterwards discovered, and killed by Ingolf, in revenge for the murder of his friend. From his lamentation over Hiörleif's dead body, we are left to infer, either that Hiörleif professed Christianity, or that he was influenced by atheistical principles, though the former be the more likely: *Litit lagdest her fyrer godan dreng, er leoter thrælar skyldo at bana verda, oc sva se ec hverrom verda er eigi vill blota.* "What an ignoble thing, for so excellent a man to fall by the hand of vile slaves! But such must ever be the fate of those who will not sacrifice to the gods."*

The promontory of *Hiörleifshöfdi* stands quite isolated; and, being somewhat hollow in the middle, it is inhabited by a solitary farmer. Its sides are nearly perpendicular, in some places excavated, and, to the west and east, its base has been terribly scooped by the deluges poured down upon the plain by the volcanic *Vökul Kötlugiá*. This mountain occupies a distinguished place among the Icelandic volcanoes. It is situated about twenty miles back from the coast, and forms the eastern termination of the *Eyafialla Vökul*. Towards the south, in which direction a number of glaciers descend from it, lie *Kötlu* and *Myrdals-sand*, a tract of about twenty square miles in extent, consisting entirely of ashes and other volcanic substances, deposited there during the eruptions, and forming one of the rudest and most forbidding scenes imaginable. As the volcano is almost entirely covered with ice, in which are large and deep fissures, it has never been fully explored; but its crater is visible at a distance, and consists of an immense gap, surrounded by black rugged rocks, which, in all probability, are nothing

* Landnamabok, Part I. cap. vi. vii.

but lava that has been instantly cooled, on its ejection, by the superincumbent ice. Olafsen and Povelsen proceeded within a short distance of it in 1756; but were obliged to give up their attempt, as they were enveloped in snow and mist, and exposed to the rage of the volcano, which had been seen to emit flames only two days before. From the occupation of the island to the present day, *Kötlugiâ* has been known to disgorge flames, and either lava, or immense exundations of hot water, *eight* different times.

The first eruption, which is also the first phenomenon of this kind mentioned in the annals of Iceland,* took place about the year 894; and its effects are still visible, in the tract of ancient lava to the east of the mountain. It was again in action in the year 1311, continuing to vomit ashes and sand the greater part of the winter; and, melting the ice about the crater, the inhabited tract in the vicinity was inundated, and all the inhabitants, except two, perished in the flood. The third eruption happened in the year 1416, and the fourth in the year 1580; but they appear to have done little damage to the inhabitants.

Of the fifth eruption of *Kötlugiâ*, which happened 1625, the following account is given by Thorstein Magnusson, at that time the occupant of *Thyckvabæ* cloister:—"At day-break on the 2d of September, it began to thunder in the Yökul; and, about eight o'clock, floods of water and ice were poured down upon the low country, and carried away upwards of two hundred loads of hay, which lay in the fields about *Thyckvabæ*. These floods continued to be poured forth, like a raging sea, till past one o'clock in the afternoon, when they gradually diminished; but were succeeded by terrible darkness, earthquakes, thunder, flames, and showers of sand. Nor was it in the immediate vicinity of the crater alone that the fire appeared, but down in the inhabited tract, at the distance of nearly twenty miles from the mountain, igneous vapours were seen attaching themselves to the clothes of the inhabitants. This dreadful scene continued, with little variation, till the 13th of the month. It was frequently

* See Landnâmabok.

so clear at night, that the mountains, with all their clefts and divisions, were seen as distinctly at the distance of twenty miles as they were in the clearest day. Sometimes the flames were pure as the sun: sometimes they were red; and, at others, they discovered all the colours of the rainbow. The lightnings were visible, now in the air, and now running over the surface of the ground; and such as witnessed them, were less or more affected, in such parts of their bodies as were uncovered. These flashes were accompanied by the loudest claps of thunder, and darted backwards and forwards, now to the ground, and now into the air, dividing sometimes into separate bolts, each of which appeared to be followed by a separate report; and after shooting in different directions, they instantly collected again, when a dreadful report was heard, and the igneous appearance fell, like a water-spout, to the ground, and became invisible. While the showers of sand lasted, it was frequently so dark in the day-time, that two individuals, holding each other by the hand, could not discover each other's face."

The sixth eruption took place in the year 1660, and the quantity of ice, &c. carried down by the inundation was so great, that, where it was deposited, it rose to the height of forty-nine fathoms above the surface of the former depositions. One of the floods carried away the houses and church of *Höfdabrecka*; and the church was observed to swim among the masses of ice, to a considerable distance in the sea, ere it fell to pieces. The volcano appears, with some intermission, to have erupted sand the two following years.

In the year 1721, the inundations lasted nearly three days, and carried along with them such amazing quantities of ice, stones, earth, and sand, that the sea was filled with them, to the distance of three miles from the shore. The sun was darkened by the smoke and ashes, which were thrown into the air; sand and pumice were blown almost over the whole island; and the ice and water desolated a considerable tract of grass land over which they flowed.*

* Mr Paulson's MS. and Horrebow's Nat. Hist. of Iceland. p. 12.

The last eruption, however, or that of 1755 and 1756, was inconceivably more dreadful than any of the preceding, and was rendered the more famous by the terrible convulsions to which, at the same time, a great part of the terrestrial globe was subjected. Not only were the British isles rocked by repeated and violent shocks of an earthquake, houses thrown down, rocks split, and the waters of the sea and lakes heaved up; but in Norway, Sweden, Germany, Holland, France, and Italy, the same phenomena were experienced. Spain and Portugal, however, suffered most from the shocks. Numerous villages, convents, and churches, were demolished; the largest mountains shaken from the foundations; and the low grounds inundated by the swelling and overflowing of the rivers. Lisbon, in particular, exhibited a scene the most tragical and melancholy. The most ponderous edifices were heaved up and shaken; steeples, towers, and houses, thrown down; the ground and streets danced under the feet of the inhabitants; and many thousands of them were buried in the ruins. Nor was the earthquake confined to Europe. It stretched over into Barbary, and destroyed upwards of a dozen of cities on the coast of Africa. Its concussions were also felt in Persia, in the West Indies, and in America.*

The inhabitants of the tract about *Kötlugiá* were first apprised of the impending catastrophe on the forenoon of the 17th of October, by a number of quick and irregular tremifactions, which were followed by three immense floods from the Yökul, that completely overflowed *Myrdals-sand* and carried before them almost incredible quantities of ice and gravel. Masses of ice, resembling small mountains in size, pushed one another forward, and bore vast pieces of solid rock on their surface. After the rocking had continued some time, an exceeding loud report was heard, when fire and water were observed to be emitted alternately by the volcano, which appeared to vent its rage through three apertures, si-

* Stukeley's Philosophy of Earthquakes, Pp. 9—30. Third Edit. Lond. 1756, 8vo.

tuated close to each other. At times the column of fire was carried to such a height, that it illuminated the whole of the surrounding atmosphere, and was seen at the distance of a hundred and eighty miles: at other times, the air was so filled with smoke and ashes, that the adjacent parishes were enveloped in total darkness. Between these alternations of light and obscurity, vast red-hot globes were thrown to a great height, and broken into a thousand pieces. The following night presented one of the most awful and sublime spectacles imaginable. An unremitting noise, like that produced by the discharge of heavy artillery, was heard from the volcano; a fiery column of variegated hues rose into the atmosphere; flames and sparks were scattered in every direction, and blazed in the most vivid manner.

The eruption continued, with more or less violence, till the 7th of November, during which period dreadful exundations of hot water were poured forth on the low country; and the masses of ice, clay, and solid rock, that they hurled into the sea, were so great, that it was filled to the distance of more than fifteen miles; and in some places where formerly it was forty fathoms deep, the tops of the newly deposited rocks were now seen towering above the water. A violent eruption happened again on the 17th of November, when the volcano remained inactive till the following year, during which it emitted fire and water five times, viz. January 15th, June 28th and 29th, and August 12th and 25th.

The principal damage occasioned by these eruptions consisted in the destruction of the pasture-grounds throughout the most part of the Syssel; in consequence of which, about fifty farms were laid waste, and the inhabitants reduced to circumstances of extreme distress. Numbers of cattle were carried away by the deluge; and the mephitic substances, with which every thing was impregnated, brought on a raging mortality in different parts of the country. On the breaking forth of the water, a number of people fled for refuge to an insulated mountain called *Hafursey*, where they were obliged to stay seven days, without either meat or drink, and were exposed to the showers of stones, fire, and water,

which fell around them. The lightning, which was very violent during the eruption, penetrated through solid rocks, and killed two people and eleven horses, three of which were in a stable. One of the persons killed was a farmer, whom it struck dead as he left the door of his house. What is remarkable, his upper clothes, which were of wool, wore no marks of fire, but the linen he had under them was burnt; and, when he was undressed, it was found that the skin and flesh of his right side were consumed to the very bone. His maid-servant was struck with the lightning at the same time; and though her clothes were instantly changed, it continued to burn in the pores of her body, and singed the clothes she put on. She died a few days afterwards, having in the mean time suffered inexpressible pain. *

Since the above mentioned period, *Kötlugiá* has remained in a state of tranquillity. The weather being extremely hazy while I was in this quarter, I was denied the pleasure of seeing the volcano itself; but on crossing a pretty deep river, called *Mulaquisl*, I observed several of the small mountains, consisting of ice, sand, and gravel, which it has hurled along in its fury. At the termination of the sand, stands a mountain of an ordinary size, the sides of which have been terribly washed away by the inundations from the Yökul; and the road lying close past its western division, the cliffs assume a most threatening appearance over the head of the traveller. Incredible as it may seem, there is a farm situated on the mountain, close to the edge of the precipice, where it may be about six or seven hundred feet of perpendicular height. Its name is *Höfdabrecka*, or "Breakneck," and lay formerly on the plain, but was removed, after an eruption, to its present elevated position, that it might escape similar accidents in future.

Turning the rocks, which are composed of tuffa, and present a very rugged and excavated appearance, we came to two beautiful dales which run up into the mountain, and are clothed on both sides with the richest grass. In the latter

* Olafsen og Povelsen, Pp. 756—762.

of these, the farms of *Vik* are situated, where the Sysselman Jon Gudmundson and the Surgeon Svend Paulson reside. They are surrounded by high ridges of mountains, which form an excellent defence against the rage of the volcano, except in front, where a noble view of the sea presents itself. At the termination of the mountain on the right, several high rocks appear in the water, which, in foggy weather, resemble a fleet of ships; and, indeed, I actually mistook them for ships at first sight. As the house of the surgeon came first in my way, I sought shelter with him from the heavy rain to which we had been exposed most part of the road. This gentleman is indisputably the first Icelander of the age with respect to natural science, especially those departments of it which more nearly concern his own island. He has travelled through the most of it, for the purpose of examining the numerous interesting phenomena with which it abounds, and has constantly kept a journal of his travels. Were this to be published, it would certainly present the world with a fuller and more accurate account of the natural history of Iceland than any we have yet received. He has also written a topographical description of the Yökuls, and other mountains of the island, which were communicated to a society in Norway; but as that society ceased to exist immediately after, Mr Paulson's essay never appeared. Were he invited to become a member of any of our geologic societies, he would be able to furnish them with much valuable information. One would almost suppose he had fixed his residence at this place, for the express purpose of watching the motions of *Kötlugiâ*, as he has only to repair to the summit of the mountain behind his house, in order to obtain a magnificent view of the whole region.

The rain continuing on the 14th, I did not leave *Vik* till three o'clock in the afternoon, when I proceeded with Mr Paulson into *Myrdal*, or the Valley of Bogs, from which the whole tract takes its name. As the afternoon was serene, the smoke arising from the numerous cottages, scattered on both sides of the valley, produced a very fine effect. Cros-

sing the swamps with considerable difficulty, we ascended a bare and stony mountain, the opposite side of which we reached a little before dark, when I prevailed on Mr P. to return, after he had pointed out to me the house of a clergyman where I intended stopping all night. My servant and I now descended into the plain; and after riding about a mile in it we came to *Hafursá*, a river otherwise of no great magnitude, but which was now much swelled by the rain. Having forded several inferior branches, we arrived at the main stream, which the servant immediately entered; but he had only proceeded a short way, when his horse was carried off his feet, and once or twice both he and the horse were completely immersed in the flood. The baggage-horses following, they were rolled furiously down by the impetuosity of the current to the distance of ten or twelve yards, so that I gave up all for lost; but, in the kind providence of God, they reached a sandbank on the opposite side of the stream, and got all safely to the margin. To pursue the tract marked by them I considered presumptuous, notwithstanding their having eventually succeeded in getting over; and riding a little higher up, I attempted to ford the same division of the stream where it broke off from the body of the river; but my horse, as if sensible of the risk his companions had run, would not proceed, and turned just in time to save both himself and me. I then returned, and called to my servant to proceed to the house, which lay close by, and request some of the people to come and shew me the proper fording-place. After an interval of about twenty minutes, I could but just discover a person on horseback endeavouring to come over to me; but, being always forced back again, I was at last told that the river was *fire*, or unfordable, and had no resource left but to endeavour, as well as I could in the dark, to retord the branch I had already crossed, and, as there were no houses in the vicinity, to ride back to the side of the mountain, where I resolved to spend the night. As I returned, I descried a light moving in the vicinity of the river; and, my imagination being somewhat disturbed by the gloominess of the scene, I fancied I

heard a person screaming, which gave me great uneasiness, as I feared either my servant, or some person belonging to the house, had fallen into the river; but I learned next morning that the light had been exposed by the good people of *Hollt*, to prevent me from bewildering myself in the dark. Having reached a part of the mountain where there was plenty of good grass, I took the saddle off my horse, and tying what strings I had about me to his bridle, I fixed the other end to the stirrups, in order to give him as extensive a range as possible, and sat down on the saddle, which kept me off the wet ground, and in this situation awaited the return of day. In one sense, I could say with Colma, "It is night. I am alone; forlorn on the hill of storms. The wind is heard in the mountain. The torrent pours down the rock. No hut receives me from the rain; forlorn on the hill of winds." But I could also, with a nobler propriety, adopt the effusions of Thomson:

> ——— "'Tis nought to me;
> Since God is ever present, ever felt,
> In the void waste, as in the city full;
> And where he vital breathes, there must be joy."

The night was long, and a number of showers fell; but the length of the one was shortened, and the disagreeableness of the other ameliorated by the happy state of my mind, to which a sense of Divine preservation, and an unshaken confidence in God, had given a tone of elevation and joy. The following lines were so completely in unison with my feelings, that I could not refrain from repeating them aloud as I approached the mountain:

> "Jesus, lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly;
> While the raging billows roll
> While the tempest still is high!
> Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
> Till the storm of life be past;
> Safe into the haven guide;
> O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none,
  Hangs my helpless soul on thee;
Leave, oh! leave me not alone,
  Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stay'd,
  All my help from thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
  With the shadow of thy wing."

About two o'clock, as I felt rather fatigued, I went to some cliffs that were fast by, and, in imitation of the patriarch Jacob, "took of the stones of that place, and put them for my pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." After day-break, when the shadows of night had vanished, I began to survey the surrounding scenery. To the right, at no great distance, lay the volcanic Yökul; the isolated mountain *Pictursey* appeared in the plain to the left, and before it the breakers were dashing with a tremendous roar upon the rocks. Direct before me lay the plain, through which the river was still pouring its restless contents: and, in the distance, I could descry the *Solheima*, and part of the *Eyafialla Vökuls*. Committing my way afresh to the Lord, I saddled my horse about five o'clock, and as I approached the river, I was met by a peasant on horseback, who had come over to my assistance. The water having now considerably abated, we got over without much difficulty; and, arriving at *Hollt*, my servant and I congratulated each other on our again meeting in the land of the living. I was immediately presented with an excellent dish of boiled milk, on which, in addition to what I had in my provision-chest, I made a most hearty meal, not having partaken of any food since the forenoon of the preceding day.

CHAP. VIII.

Fell—Solheima—Yökul River—Solheima Yökul—Caves—Steinar—Varmahlid—Vestmanna Islands—Algerine Pirates—Hollt—Markarfliot—Intelligent Peasant—Fliotshlid—Oddè—Dean Jonson—Sæmund Sigfusson—Mount Hekla—Number of its Eruptions—Eyrarbacka—Desolate Mountains—Rein-deer—Reykiavik.

On the 15th of September, after spending about an hour and a half in the company of the clergyman's wife at *Hollt*, who could not sufficiently regret the absence of her husband, I proceeded round the hill to *Fell*, where I was kindly received by the Dean, Sira Thord Bryniolfson. As this gentleman had only been recently invested with the office of Dean, it was not in his power to give me an exact idea of the actual state of the people within his bounds relative to the Holy Scriptures; yet he was of opinion that not many copies of the entire Bible were to be met with, but that several copies of the New Testament, published in 1807, had found their way thither. He engaged to exert himself to the utmost in ascertaining what number of copies would be wanted; to write to his clergy, requesting them to notify the arrival of the Scriptures to their congregations; and after he had learned the result, to transmit it to *Reykiavik*, in order to secure the requisite supply.

About ten o'clock the Dean dressed, and accompanied me to *Solheima*. Excepting a small tract to the west of *Fell*, which consists for the most part of stones and sand, and is intersected by floods from the Yökul, the road lay over hills that were completely covered with rich grass; and as no cliffs or breaks were visible, the landscape reminded me of some familiar lawns in the Lowlands of Scotland, while the

herds that were browsing on it apprised me of the wealthy circumstances of the *Solheima* farmers. On our arrival at *West Solheima*, where there is a church and several houses of a superior appearance, we were instantly shewn by the peasant into a large room well furnished with books, among which I was happy to observe a folio Bible; and as his wife was from home, he set to work himself with the coffee-mill, and prepared for us an excellent dish of that expensive article of foreign luxury.

The Dean now returned, after having committed me to the care of the peasant, who undertook to guide me across the dangerous Yökul river on *Solheima-sand*. This river, which forms the division between the eastern and southern *Fiordungar*, was originally only a small streamlet, but was increased to such a degree by the revolution that took place in the Yökul about the year 900, that it inundated the plain, and washed away the whole of its soil. The phenomena were so novel to those who had fixed their habitation in the vicinity, that the frequency with which it changed its course was ascribed to the influence of magic.* It was called *Fulalæk*, or the fœtid torrent, on account of the sulphureous smell of its water, a property the river still has, and which shews that a quantity of sulphur must exist in the bowels of the Yökul in which it originates. It has gradually deepened its channel in the sand; and the eastern bank, towards which the most of the water inclines, is from thirty to fifty feet in height. The whole breadth of the channel may be about a quarter of a mile. On our arrival at the margin, we had at once a full view of the mighty waters, hastening, with resistless fury, down the sloping descent to the ocean, which received them at no great distance. We here stopped while the peasant descended into the river, but after several venturesome attempts, he was obliged to return; and, riding a little farther down, we entered it where its waters were more spread, and found it nearly as formidable as that on *Breidamark sand*, only we were unmolested by masses of

* Olafsen og Povelsen, p. 845. Landfamabok, Part IV. cap. v.

ice. Owing to the breadth and rapidity of the current, the traveller is apt to become giddy in passing these rivers; and instances have been known of persons who, by that means, have fallen off their horses and perished.

I have the greater reason to be thankful for the distinguishing goodness of God in preserving me from danger on the present occasion, as I have since been informed, that only a few days after I forded this dangerous river, two travellers, in attempting to cross it, were carried away by the stream, one of whom was never more seen, and the other was found the same day, almost half dead, on a small sand-bank in the middle of the river! The horse of the former shared the same fate with his master; and the latter owed his ultimate escape to his horse being on the same sand-bank on which he was lying, as it would otherwise have been impossible to discover him.

The *Solheima Yökul* stretches here along the north side of the sand, and is relieved on the east by *Myrdal's Yökul* and *Kötlugiâ*, and on the west by the lofty *Eyafialla Yökul*, which is about 5,500 feet in height, and is more than half covered with snow and ice. It is this ice mountain which is generally first discovered by those who sail for the southern ports of the island, to whom it is known by the name of the Eastern Yökul, in distinction from that of the *Snæfell*, which they call the Western Yökul. Both the *Eyafialla* and *Solheima* are volcanic mountains; and it was most probably one of them that emitted fire in 1717, of which mention is made in the annals of the country, where it is indefinitely termed *Austur-Yökul*. It is remarkable, that the last eruption of *Kötlugiâ* threw the *Solheima* Yökul into such violent convulsions, that it rose and fell by turns, and was at last raised so high that it appeared double its former size.* As the most of it was shrouded in mist, I was denied a sight of the superior regions, but I had a fine view of a magnificent glacier, which descends into the plain at the egress of the river.

* Olafsen og Povelsen, p. 763.

From this place, the road runs past the two farms of *Skogar*, close by the more westerly of which, is the most beautiful water-fall on the island. The river descends between high ledges of broken rock till it reaches a perpendicular precipice, over which it is thrown in one unbroken sheet, measuring at least fifteen feet in breadth, and about forty in height. Crossing the *Cataract* river, I came to a mountain called *Hrutafell*, which is extremely narrow, but stretches about two miles in a westerly direction. It is composed of a rough species of tuffa, and has been terribly rent and disrupted by the earthquakes which are so common in this quarter. Masses, several hundred square feet in size, have been dislodged on the plain; and at one place in particular, nearly the half of the mountain appears to have been overthrown, while the remainder assumes the most impending attitude. Yet in this situation, perilous as it may appear, several farmers have raised their habitations, and turned the disrupted masses of rock to their advantage, by converting the large caves, which are contained in them, into sheep-cotes, stables, and hay-lofts. One of these I entered on passing, and found it nearly full of hay, together with harness, and other implements of husbandry, which were hanging around the walls; but am sorry that the hay prevented me from discovering the entrance to what, I have since been apprised, forms the most remarkable thing about the cave—a vast apartment, measuring seventy-two feet in length, by twenty-four in breadth, and twelve in height, within which is a smaller room, serving for a bed-chamber, which is fifteen feet long, and nine in breadth. Both places are said to have been cut out by people in former times; and, according to a tradition current in the neighbourhood, it was inhabited by a champion named Hrutur; who, retiring into this stronghold, set his enemies at defiance, till at last they dug through the roof of the cave and killed him.*

At the western termination of this mountain, the plain runs back between the mountains forming the base of the

* Olafsen og Povelsen, p. 927.

Eyafialla Yökul; and, though the tract be of no great breadth, I question if there be a spot in Iceland that is better inhabited. At one view, I counted not fewer than twenty-five farm houses and two or three churches. The ground is rather marshy, but yields a considerable quantity of hay. Having scrambled over the bogs, which were greatly softened by the heavy rain that had fallen the most of the day, I reached the base of the long, precipitous, and rugged ridge of sand-stone cliffs in front of the Yökul; and passing through *Steinar*, a village consisting of seven families, and the first I had seen since leaving Zealand, I arrived, about seven in the evening, at a farm called *Varmahlid*, and tented on a dry sloping ground to the east of the houses. The rain now began to pour down in torrents, and for some time prevent me from obtaining the rest I so much needed, and to which I instantly repaired after having enjoyed my evening repast.

Next morning, before I got fully dressed, I was surprised by the peasant, who, drawing aside the cloth of my tent-door, presented me with a large bowl of excellent coffee. It was in vain I remonstrated against the trouble to which they had put themselves; he courteously replied, that I was so uncommon a guest, that centuries might elapse ere another such traveller came to *Varmahlid*, and the object of my journey being so noble, it was their duty to contribute the little that lay in their power to my accommodation and comfort. I had no sooner left my tent, than I was invited into the house, where I found a mahogany table, furnished with a delicious dish of hashed fish, after which, skyr and cream were served up. I had also the pleasure of eating rye-bread, baked in the Icelandic manner. The rites of hospitality were performed by an elderly female, step-mother to the peasant, who was dressed in her Sunday clothes, and presented a very respectable appearance. Every thing about the room looked neat and clean; and the small library was adorned with a well-bound copy of the quarto Bible.

From this place, as the morning was clear, I had a magnificent prospect of the *Vestmanna* islands, which lie at the

distance of about fifteen miles from the coast, and take their name from the Irish slaves, who, as has already been mentioned, fled thither for refuge in the year 875. These islands are fourteen in number, but consist entirely of barren vitrified rocks, except four, on which there is a scanty supply of pasture. Only one of them is inhabited; and from that circumstance is called *Heimacy*, or *Home-Island*. It is defended by high cliffs on all sides; and its surface is diversified by a considerable quantity of lava, and several low volcanic hills, which are said to have been in action at no very remote period.* There is a harbour here, within a high perpendicular rock, which receives the breakers as they fall upon it, and renders the water behind perfectly smooth. The trade is considerable, and consists chiefly of fish and the feathers of the birds that inhabit the cliffs. These the people catch in abundance, being wonderfully expert in climbing the most hideous precipices, and descending by ropes to the roosts of the fowls. They not only use their flesh for food, but convert it, after it has been properly dried, into fuel, the smell of which renders their hovels, otherwise disagreeable, absolutely intolerable to strangers.

The *Vestmanna* islands have a separate Sysselmand and two clergymen, who both officiate in the same church, which was rebuilt of stone, at the royal expense, in the year 1774, and is said to be one of the best belonging to Iceland. It is worthy of notice, that the tithes are still raised here according to the Norwegian mode, which is ascribed to their having been bequeathed by one of the *Skalholt* bishops, before the Reformation, to the monastery of St Michael in *Bergen*.

Fortified as the inhabitants are, both by their poverty and the steepness of their native cliffs, they have, nevertheless, been twice exposed to the outrageous depredations of merciless pirates. The first time they were attacked was in 1614, when the crew of an English vessel landed here, under the command of one John commonly called *Gentle-*

* Olafsen et Povelsen, p. 857.

man, from the softness of his manners, maltreated the persons of the inhabitants, and pillaged the church and other houses on the island. On their return to England, they were detected and punished, and the church-property was restored three years afterwards by order of King James. A more direful calamity, however, overtook them in the year 1627. A number of Algerine pirates, after having committed several acts of rapine and cruelty, both in the southern and eastern quarters of Iceland, arrived at *Heymacy*, took most of the inhabitants captive, and bound them with fetters on board the corsair, and pillaged and burnt the church, and other houses on the island. One of the clergymen, Jon Thorsteinson, the first translator of the Psalms of David into Icelandic verse, and who also translated the book of Genesis, and other parts of Scripture, in a similar manner, was basely murdered by one of his own countrymen who had embarked in the expedition, and he has on that account obtained the name of martyr. The other clergyman, Olafr Egilson, was carried, with his wife and children, and near four hundred of his countrymen, into a state of wretched captivity, to *Algiers*, whence he was released two years afterwards, and wrote an account of their miseries, which was afterwards published in Danish. Only thirty-seven survived their calamities, having been released at the royal expense in 1636; yet even of that number, not more than thirteen persons regained their native island. *

Leaving *Varmahlid*, I proceeded on to the church and parsonage of *Hollt*; on my arrival at which, I discovered that the clergyman, Sira Bryniolfr Sivertson, was the same individual who had long officiated in *Reykiavik*, and had only left it for this place a few weeks before I came to the island. It was cause of mutual regret that I had not spent the night with him, especially as the exchange of a few words convinced us that we were "of one mind," relative to the importance and value of the Gospel of Christ. After spend-

* Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 80—83. At p. 136 of the same work, is inserted a most pitiable letter from the captives, dated Algiers, 1635.

ing about an hour and a half with him and his interesting lady, who kindly prepared coffee for me, I again left *Holti*, accompanied by Sira B. who proceeded till within a little of the termination of the *Eyafialla* mountains, and expressed the most lively joy on hearing of the mighty triumphs of divine revelation. A little before we parted, we stopped a few minutes to survey a curious cascade on the brow of the mountain, at least eight hundred feet high. What rendered it peculiarly interesting was the circumstance, that though the quantity of water precipitated over the rocks was by no means inconsiderable, yet it was prevented from falling by a strong current of air ascending from the foot of the mountain, which converted the whole column into spray, and carrying it up like a cloud into the atmosphere: nothing could more exactly resemble the column of steam arising from the hot springs. I was told by the clergyman that this cascade serves as a mark to the fishermen, who repair from the main-land to the *Vestmanna* Islands, as its falling in an unbroken sheet to the base of the precipice is a proof that there is but little wind sweeping along the coast; but when it is borne up in the manner just described, they are then certain that the beach is inaccessible. It is called *Drifanda Foss*, or "The Driving Cascade." The fishermen have a similar mark at the islands, by which they know whether they may proceed with safety from the shore or not.

Almost close to the termination of the long range of mountains, forming the base of the *Eyafialla Yökul*, flows the *Markarfliot*, a broad river, which receives its waters from the Yökuls, and, dividing into a number of considerable streams, previous to its junction with the sea, it forms several islands that are inhabited chiefly by fishermen. Like similar Yökul rivers, which flow through sandy plains, it does not always keep the same course, and is frequently unfordable near the coast; in which case, travellers are obliged to go round by *Hlidarenda*, which lies farther back on the opposite side of the valley, and is famous for its having been the abode of Gunnar, who occupies so conspicuous a place in the Saga of Niál Thorgeirson. Its inhabitants have al-

ways been people of the first respectability; and at present it is occupied by the Sysselmand, Cancellieraad Thorarinson, who is connected with the best families on the island.

Fording the river, which, notwithstanding its breadth, was accomplished without much difficulty, I entered the tract called *Fliotshlid*, which is for the most part low and swampy, but gets more fertile towards the hills on the eastern side of the plain. As I rode along, I was entertained by the interesting conversation of a peasant, who was travelling to *Reykiavik* in order to dispose of his country produce. The knowledge he discovered of the geography and politics of Britain quite astonished me. He gave me a long detail of the events that transpired during the usurpation of Cromwell, and proposed several questions relative to the *Thames*, *Tay*, *Forth*, &c. His acquaintance with these things he has chiefly derived from Danish books; and having lately fallen in with an interesting work in German, he has begun to learn that language, in order to make himself master of its contents. I could not help smiling when he told me, in as grave and positive a tone as if he had been versed in all the learning of the schools, that the late Dr Jonson of *Skalholt* was profoundly skilled, not only in theology, but also in *philosophy*. This last word he pronounced with an emphasis and an air, which indicated a conviction of his having said something big with important meaning. As a proof that he had not read the Scriptures without reflection, I may mention his being somewhat at a loss to account for the term wrath being ascribed to God in the Bible; and it was not till I had explained to him the difference between holy and reasonable anger, and that which is unreasonable and malicious, and shewn him that the expression, as applied to the Divine Being, signified his disapprobation of every species of iniquity, and was ultimately resolvable into his love of righteousness, that he declared himself satisfied on the subject.

As the road to *Oddè*, where I intended stopping all night, was distinctly visible, being well trod, and lying across a tract covered with volcanic sand, I left the men to bring on

the baggage at their leisure, and proceeded forward by myself, in order to call on the conrector of the late school at *Skalholt*, whose house lay directly in my way. Fording the *Thverâ*, which was in some places so deep that my horse swam with me, I encountered a pretty extensive tract of swampy ground, in which I completely missed the road; and it was not till I had made considerable progress in the vast plain before *Mount Hekla*, that I found the path I was following led into the division called *Hreppar*. I therefore struck off to the left, and after riding about an hour, I reached the bank of the *Eastern Rângá*, where I fell in with two lads belonging to the conrector, who put me into the track leading to his house. This aged gentleman I found to be a zealous lover of sacred literature; and, what is of still greater importance, a sincere friend to vital and practical religion. Having spent about two hours with him, he favoured me with a man to conduct me through the river to *Oddè*, where I arrived a little past nine o'clock.

On entering the house, it gave me pain to think I had come so late, as most of the family were gone to bed; but I had not spent many minutes in admiring the neatness and modern style of a room into which I was shewn, when the Dean, Sira Steingrimr Jonson, made his appearance, and in the frankest and most affectionate manner, bade me welcome to Iceland and to his house. In this gentleman, my expectations, which had been raised to no ordinary pitch by what I had read in Sir George Mackenzie's Travels, were fully met, and even exceeded; and I can only, with that traveller and his companions, regret that I did not enjoy more of his company. With his extensive classical acquirements, he unites great urbanity of manners; and is deservedly held in the highest esteem and repute by his countrymen. After finishing his studies at the University of Copenhagen, he acted for some time as secretary to the late Bishop Finnson, and having been appointed Lector Theologiæ in the school of *Bessastad*, he continued to fill that office, with great credit and ability, till the year 1810, when he received the Deanery of *Rângârvalla Syssel*.

In a short time, his lady, the relict of the Bishop just mentioned, came into the room, and very politely served up an excellent supper of rice and milk. About midnight I was shewn into a sleeping-room, where there was an excellent bed, which I could not but conclude, from every appendage, to have belonged to the episcopal see; and not having slept in a house since leaving *Berufiord*, which was now upwards of a fortnight, I was the more sensible of the luxury of my accommodation.

It frequently happens, that places which have been rendered famous by the celebrity of their possessors, fall in the course of time into other hands, and scarcely retain a single vestige of their former lustre. It is, however, very different at the present day with respect to *Oddè*. Its present occupant is a worthy successor of Sæmund Sigfusson, Jon Loptson, and other distinguished characters, who have flourished here during the earlier and more interesting periods of Icelandic literature. Sæmund, commonly surnamed Frodè, or The Learned, who had spent several years at the most renowned Universities of Germany and France, and would, in all probability, have been lost to his country, had it not been for the interposition of his relation Jon Ogmundson, entered into holy orders on his return to Iceland, and established, at *Oddè*, a seminary for the education of youth. He likewise applied himself to the composition of several literary works, none of which, however, have reached our times, except the poetic part of those valuable remnants of Scandinavian antiquity, comprehended under the general name of The Edda; and, from this circumstance, intituled Sæmund's Edda, to distinguish it from the prosaic part, which is generally ascribed to Snorro Sturluson. For a further account of this famous work, the reader is referred to the Appendix; and I would only further observe here, that, as Snorro spent sixteen years at *Oddè*, under the tuition of Jon Loptson, the grandson of Sæmund, he had an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge, not only of the Eddaic poetry itself, but also of the sources from which it had been derived. The *Oddè* Annals have also been ascribed to Sæmund; but Bishop

Jonson shews them to be the production of a more recent age. *

Oddè is situated on the south-east side of a number of low hills, which are completely overgrown with grass, and form a very extensive *tûn*. On the morning of the 17th, the Dean accompanied me to the top of the highest, from which I had a fine view of the surrounding plain. It is perhaps the most extensive that is to be met with on the island, being not less than twenty miles in every direction; and as the volcanic ashes and sand, which compose its foundation, are in most places covered with a pretty thick soil, it affords uncommonly rich pasturage. I had, at the same time, a magnificent view of *Mount Hekla*, which reared its snow-capped summits to the clouds, and, by calling to mind the desolations it has spread upon the adjacent country, inspired the mind with a temporary melancholy and gloom. Were it not for this circumstance, combined with the number of its recorded eruptions, there is little in the appearance of Hekla to attract the notice of the traveller, even supposing him never to have seen any other mountains but those in the vicinity. The *Trehyrning*, or Three Horned Mountain, between *Hekla* and the *Eyafialla Yökul*, has a far nobler and more picturesque appearance. Having been accustomed to hear of this volcano as rivalling *Vesuvius* and *Etna*, a strong prejudice in favour of its magnitude and grandeur had rooted itself in my mind, and I had formed the idea that the very sight of it must be replete with gratification. Now, however, when I had it direct before me, at the distance of about four-and-twenty miles, it sunk into comparative insignificance; nor do I conceive there is any thing about *Hekla* that is calculated to make an indelible impression on the memory, except an actual eruption, which, of course, must present a spectacle never to be forgotten.

Hekla is situated about thirty miles back from the coast, and is estimated at somewhat near 4000 feet in height. Its summit is divided into three peaks, the middle of which is

* Hist. Eccles. Island. Tom. I. p. 198. Note.

the highest. The craters form vast hollows on the sides of these peaks, and, according to the last accounts, are partially filled with snow. The mountain itself consists, for the most part, of sand and slags; the lava being confined to the lower regions, and forming an immensely rugged and vitrified wall around its base. From this circumstance it has been concluded, that the lava has not proceeded from the craters at the summit of *Hekla*, but from apertures at no great elevation on its sides. There was very little snow on it at this time; and, indeed, the Dean informed me, that there has been a considerably less quantity than usual observed these three last years, which is most probably owing to an increase of heat in the interior of the mountain, and, taken in connection with the long interval which has now elapsed since its last eruption, has naturally given rise to the apprehension that some new explosion is at no great distance. Sir George Mackenzie, Dr Holland, and Mr Bright, are the last travellers who have ascended *Mount Hekla*. On the 3d of August, 1810, they gained its summit, at which time they observed the vapour of water ascending from several parts of the middle peak, and the heat in the mountain was so intense, that on removing a few of the slags from the surface, they found those below too hot to be handled; and on placing a thermometer amongst them, it rose to 144°. *

This famous volcano is supposed to have emitted lava previous to the occupation of the island; but, subsequent to that period, *twenty-three* eruptions are recorded, of which the dates, and the intervals that existed between them, are as follows.

* Travels in Iceland, p. 216

Number.	Date.	Interval between the eruptions
1.	A. D. 1004	
2.	1029	25 years.
3.	1105	76 —
4.	1113	8 —
5.	1157	44 —
6.	1206	49 —
7.	1222	16 —
8.	1294	72 —
9.	1300	6 —
10.	1340	40 —
11.	1374	34 —
12.	1390	16 —
13.	1436	46 —
14.	1510	74 —
15.	1554	44 —
16.	1580	29 —
17.	1619	36 —
18.	1625	6 —
19.	1636	11 —
20.	1693	57 —
21.	1728	35 —
22.	1754	26 —
23.	1766—1768	12 —

From these dates it will appear, that sometimes a considerable period intervenes between the eruptions, and that nearly fifty years have now elapsed since the last time the volcano was in action. The dates are taken from the original of Von Troil's Letters; * in which they are stated to be founded on the accounts of Jacobsen, Olafsen and Povelsen, and others. The latter gentlemen, after regretting the inaccuracy of the annals on this subject, mention their firm conviction, that twenty-two eruptions had taken place previous to the time they wrote, independent of the irregularity of the records It is to be observed, however, that these eruptions have differed greatly, both in point of magnitude and dura

* Upsala, 1777, 8vo. p. 285.

tion. Some of them have only lasted a few days, others for months, and some have continued more than a year.

The surrounding country was formerly inhabited almost close to the mountain, and is said to have been uncommonly beautiful and fertile; but the successive inundations of lava have entombed the farms; and the verdant meadows have been almost entirely covered with sand and pumice. The circumjacent farms suffered considerably in the eruption of 1766; but the principal damage was done to the districts in the north of Iceland, by the ashes that were carried by the wind to that quarter.

The population of *Rângârvalla-Syssel*, of which Sira Steingrimr is Dean, consists of 3,999 souls; few of the families are in possession of the Scriptures; and not more than the half are able to purchase copies of the present edition, notwithstanding the low price at which they are sold. Sira S. had already matured a plan for their distribution, and he assured me they would be received with the utmost gratitude and joy.

After spending the forenoon in a very interesting conversation, which embraced various literary topics, and especially those connected with sacred learning, I left *Oddè* about twelve o'clock, and was accompanied by the Dean across the *Western Rângâ*, and the extensive marshy waste which lies between *Oddè* and the *Thiorsâ* ferry. Having given his boy directions to proceed with me to *Eyrarbackà*, and seen me into the boat, the Dean returned, and we immediately launched into the stream, which at this place is very broad; and being extremely shallow towards the opposite side, we were obliged to land on a sand-bank, a little past the middle, where we mounted our horses, and forded the remainder of the river. The road now lay through a level tract, the soil of which was wet, but, being supported by lava, at no great depth, we crossed it with great ease; and arriving at the sea, we proceeded along the beach to *Eyrarbacka*, which we reached about eight o'clock in the evening. I was here hospitably received by my friend Kammer-Assessor Thorlacius, who had only arrived with his family a

few days before me; as also by the merchant to whom the trading-station belongs, Mr Lambasson, in whose vessel a considerable quantity of New Testaments had arrived from Copenhagen.

Eyrarbacka is the first harbour on the south coast of Iceland, the beach being inaccessible along the whole of the intermediate space between this place and *Berufiord*, owing to the heavy swell in the sea, and its being entirely without shelter, either from rocks or islands. There is here a number of blind volcanic rocks a short way out from the shore, by which the swell is in a great measure broken. Owing, however, to the same reason, the entrance is very crooked and dangerous; and, even when a vessel has got in, she is obliged to be fastened by four or five strong cables, which, at great expense, are made fast to large iron rings, soldered into the surrounding rocks. As the beach on which the dwelling-house and warehouses stand is low, the sea breaks completely over it in winter, and has more than once inundated the houses, though a formidable barrier of stones has been raised in front, for the purpose of defending them against the fury of that turbulent element.

Having letters to write to Copenhagen, I did not leave *Eyrarbacka* before the afternoon of the 19th, when proceeding about a mile to the north-west, I came to the ferry over the *Ölfus-á*, a mighty river, nearly half a mile in breadth, which is formed by the confluence of the *Sog*, and the *Bruarâr-vatn*, together with a number of inferior rivers, with the *Hvitâ*, which I had passed, near its egress, on my way to the north, and which even then wore a formidable appearance. As the adjacent country lies very low, it is frequently overflowed, especially in spring, when a thaw happens to take place on the mountains before the river has been cleared of the masses of ice that had collected in it during the winter. From the ferry I proceeded nearly two miles along the west side of the river, and after crossing a rugged stream of lava, arrived a little after dark at *Breidabolstad*, the last farm on the south side of the mountains, where I pitched

my tent, and was treated with the usual Icelandic hospitality.

On Tuesday, the 20th of September, I started at an early hour, in order to finish the last stage of my journey for the present season. From *Breidabolstad*, the road runs in a northerly direction, and leads, all at once, into one of the most gloomy and inhospitable regions I had yet traversed. It forms part of the long range of irregular and shapeless mountains, which stretches the whole way from *Thingvallavatn* to *Cape Reykianess;* and which partly owes its origin to the awful effects of subterraneous fire, and has partly been overturned during subsequent convulsions. Beds of lava lie scattered here in every direction; and I found it no easy matter to elude the cracks and fissures which every now and then opened into the road. Having traversed the lava for some time, my attention was attracted by a number of craters to the right, which are known by the name of *Tröl-ladyngiar*, or "Magic Heaps." They are mostly of a conic form, and hollow within, and are covered with red slag, the last effects of subterraneous heat. It was from this tract that the famous eruption of A. D. 1000 proceeded; while the national assembly was deliberating whether the Christian religion should be adopted or not, and which gave rise to the well-known argument of Snorri Godi. * According to the statement of Bishop Gisle Oddson, in his *Collect. MSS. ad Hist. Nat.* another eruption took place in 1340; † and, indeed the place bears every mark of reiterated devastation.

Just before leaving this singularly wild desert, I was surprised by a fine flock of rein-deer, marching slowly down the side of a mountain close beside me. They were more than fifty in number, and were under the guidance of a noble stag, who led the van, and every now and then turned round to look at me, and inspect the state of his troops

> "Nor yet appear his care and conduct small;
> From rank to rank he moves and orders all.
> The stately ram thus measures o'er the ground,
> And, master of the flocks, surveys them round."

* Page 12. † Olafsen og Povelsen, p. 74.

What is said of the wild ass, may equally apply to the stag: "Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing." Job xxxviii. 6, 8. It was in these mountains, that three rein-deer were introduced from Lapland, in the year 1770, and they have now multiplied to that degree, that they form numerous herds, and subsist on the moss, which grows plentifully in this quarter. It is but seldom that any of them are killed, the inhabitants suffering them to remain in quiet possession of these desolate regions. They appeared much tamer than I should have supposed, and allowed me to ride within half a gun-shot of them, before they mended their pace.

At the termination of the lava I descended by a very precipitous path into a deep gulley, the bottom of which was covered with slags and volcanic sand, and, extricating myself by a pass, the sides of which exhibited huge masses of tuffa, I entered a vast plain entirely overrun with lavas, the various ages of which were not only visible from the streams which had successively been heaped above each other, but also from their colour, and the greater or less quantity of soil which is here and there attached to their surface. After a very fatiguing ride, I came to the *Tröllа-börn*, or "Giants' Children," a number of minute, but singularly interesting volcanic chimnies, which have been formed by the cooling of the lava. They are from five to eight feet in height, and the largest may be twenty feet around the base. They are all hollow within: most of them domed, and presenting more or less of a lateral opening through which the melted substances have obtained a fresh vent. The lava is strongly vitrified, and its colour varies from a black to a light green. The outside of the dome exhibits a slaty appearance, resembling the scales of a fish, while it is hung within with the most beautiful stalactites. Some of these craters serve for sheep-pens; and in one of them I discovered a hard bed of lava, which is used by those who traverse this tract in winter. I had no sooner quitted this interesting spot, than I recognised the *Esian* and other mountains to the north-

east of *Reykiavik*. I now applied for the last time to my stock of provisions, and leaving my servant to bring up the baggage-horses at his leisure, I rode on to *Reykiavik*, where I arrived about five o'clock in the afternoon, after an absence of fifty-eight days, and performing a journey of more than 1200 British miles.

CHAP. IX.

Winter in Iceland—Climate—Greenland ice—Aurora Borealis—Travelling—Occupations in general—Winter employments—Fishery—Manner in which the Icelanders spend the long evenings—Family devotion—Education—Bessastad school—Solitude of Winter—Tone of Society at Reykiavik.

THOUGH this island occupies a more southerly latitude, and presents, on the whole, a much greater extent of vegetation than the adjacent continent, it has nevertheless been unfortunately doomed to bear the repulsive name of *Iceland*, while the other has been favoured with the pleasing and animating appellation of *Greenland*. The imposition of these names was wholly arbitrary, according to the accidental circumstances of the individuals with whom they originated. Floki, the third adventurer to Iceland, happening to ascend one of the mountains in the western peninsula, discovered a bay completely filled with *Greenland* ice, and therefore thought himself entitled to change the name given to the island by his predecessors, to that which it has ever since retained. The consequence has been, that the generality of those who inhabit more genial climes, have viewed it as equally inhospitable with the most rigid of the polar regions, and considered the natives as exposed to all the benumbing influence of relentless frosts, and perpetually immersed in ice and snow. This, however, is far from being the case. The climate is perhaps more unsettled, but it is very seldom that the cold is more intense than in the south of Scandinavia. At first, I confess, I shuddered at the idea of spending a winter in Iceland; but what was my surprise when I found the temperature of the atmosphere not only greater than that of the

preceding winter in Denmark, but equal to that of the mildest I have lived either in Denmark or Sweden!

In the month of November, the mercury in Fahrenheit's thermometer did not sink lower than 20°, and it was nearly as often above the freezing point as below it. On the 6th of December, with clear weather and a light breeze from the east-north-east, it sunk to 8° 30′, after which, especially towards the end of the year, the weather became remarkably mild, and continued in this state till near the middle of January; the thermometer for the most part between 34° and 40°. On the 10th and 11th of January it fell as low as 15° 30′, but rose again in a short time, and continued much more frequently above than below the point of congelation till the 7th of March, when we had a strong wind from the N. N. W., and the mercury, which had stood the preceding day between 30° and 31°, sunk in the morning to 9° 30′, at noon to 8°, and at 9 o'clock in the evening it fell as low as 4° 30′, which was the strongest degree of frost we had the whole winter. The following evening it was at 6°; on the 9th it rose to 10°; on the 10th to 19°; and so on till the 13th, when it got again to 32°, and continued for the most part above it the whole of the month. On the 12th of April it fell to 19°, but otherwise kept varying between 32° and 52°. About the middle of May the atmosphere grew colder, occasioned most probably by the approach of some masses of Greenland ice, and on the 18th and several of the following days the mercury was at 29°.

The quantity of snow that fell during the winter was very considerable, especially in the northern parts of the island, where many of the peasants were reduced to circumstances of great distress, by the total consumption of the fodder they had provided for their cattle. The atmosphere was on the whole rather clear and serene, than darkened by mists, which is in a great measure to be ascribed to the prevalence of brisk land winds, to which the mountainous nature of the country is extremely favourable.

It must, at the same time, be allowed, that the winter of 1814, as well as that which immediately preceded it, was

considered by the Icelanders as uncommonly mild. In the course of the last century, the winters of 1717, 1742, 1784, and 1792, were excessively severe; and the salt water itself was frozen to such an extent, that a communication was kept up for some time on the ice between the coasts on some of the principal bays, as also between the different islands in the *Breidafiord*. The keenest frost ever experienced in Iceland was in the year 1348, when the ocean was congealed all round the island, so as to admit of the inhabitants riding on horseback from the one promontory to the other on the ice.

Nothing so materially affects the climate of Iceland as the arrival of the floating ice from the opposite coast of Greenland. Generally towards the end of wint r, and sometimes in the beginning of summer, it is seen moving towards the coast in immense masses, which are not unfrequently piled one above another, and more resemble islands with mountains, castles, and spires, than bodies of ice. They are so thick that they have been known to run aground in eighty fathoms' water. Their motion is not so much accelerated by the wind as by the current; but their rapidity, when impelled by these two causes conjointly, is so great, that no six-oared boat is able to keep up with them. When the sea is agitated by a storm, the ice-islands are dashed against each other in the most tremendous manner; the noise arising from the crash is heard at a great distance; and, as often happens, the drift timber jammed in between the masses takes fire from the friction, presenting to the eye of the spectator a scene the most incongruous that can possibly be imagined. The quantity of floating ice is commonly so great, that it not only chokes up all the friths and bays, but extends to such a distance in the ocean that its termination cannot be discovered from the summit of the highest mountain; and in the year 1766 the whole of the vast strait between Iceland and Greenland was entirely closed up with it.* It principally infests the northern, and part of the eastern coasts, as likewise the western friths, but it is seldom that it surrounds the whole island.

* Tremarc[illegible] d'un Voyage dans la Mer du Nord

While the masses of ice remain in a state of fluctuation, sometimes at a distance, and sometimes nearer the coast, the weather is very unsettled, and the winds are cold and damp; but when they are driven into the bays, and the salt water freezes around them, the weather becomes more steady; the cold increases; and insalubrious fogs are carried over the whole island. The consequences are, that the winter snows are longer in melting; it is late before the frost leaves the ground; vegetation is more backward and scanty; and the summer so short, that the peasants have great difficulty in getting home the small quantity of hay that may have been produced. Add to this, the devastations committed by the Greenland bears, which sometimes arrive in considerable numbers on the ice. * Fortunately for the natives, they have now been three winters exempt from any quantity of drift ice, though many of them begin to be apprehensive lest this period of respite should be more than counterbalanced by the severity of the ensuing season. †

* It frequently happens that the natives of Iceland are pursued by the Polar bear, when he has been long at sea, and his natural ferocity has been strengthened by the keenness of hunger: yet, though unarmed, they generally make their escape. Observing him approach them, they simply throw down a mitten into the path, and the bear, on coming up to it, is so powerfully attracted by the operation of the smell of the perspiration on his olfactory nerves, that he instantly stops, and it is not till after he has turned the thumb, and every finger of the mitten inside out, that he recommences his pursuit. By this time the Icelanders have got to a considerable distance; and should he again threaten to overtake them, they have a fresh *corps de reserve*, and by dropping one mitten after another, they may succeed in retarding his progress till they have effected their escape.

As soon as it is known that a bear has arrived on the island, the inhabitants of the district collect, and go with fire-arms in pursuit of him; and the individual who kills him is not only well paid for the skin, which is reckoned very valuable, but receives besides a considerable reward from the King of Denmark.

† I have since been informed, that a vast quantity of Greenland ice has been floated into the bays about Iceland in the spring of 1816, and a still greater quantity in 1817, which must have arisen from the breaking up of the immense barrier of ice by which the east coast of Greenland has been surrounded for the last four centuries. However, if this enormous mass should entirely have disappeared, there is every reason to anticipate a very considerable amelioration in the climate of Iceland.

The most striking aërial phenomenon exhibited by an Icelandic winter, is doubtless the aurora borealis, or northern lights, which are here seen in all their brilliancy and grandeur. I had an opportunity of contemplating them almost every clear night the whole winter, sometimes shooting across the hemisphere in a straight line, and presenting to the view, for a whole evening, one vast steady stream of light; but, more commonly, they kept dancing and running about with amazing velocity, and a tremulous motion, exhibiting, as they advanced, some of the most beautiful curvated appearances. On gaining one point of the hemisphere, they generally collected as if to muster their forces, and then began again to branch out into numerous ranks, which struck off to the greatest distances from each other as they passed the zenith, yet so as always to preserve the whole of the phenomenon in an oval shape; when they contracted nearly in the same way as they expanded; and, after uniting in a common point, they either returned in the course of a few minutes, or were lost in a stream of light, which grew fainter and fainter, the nearer it approached the opposite side of the heavens. They were mostly of a dunnish yellow, yet often assuming mixtures of red and green. When they are particularly quick and vivid, a crackling noise is heard, resembling that which accompanies the escape of the sparks from an electric machine. They almost always took their rise from the summit of *Mount Esian*, which is about due north-east from *Reykiavik*, and proceeded in a south-west direction. When visible the whole length of the hemisphere, they were uniformly strongest towards the north and north-east, and were always sure to be seen in that quarter, when they appeared nowhere else Once or twice I observed them in the south, but they were very faint and stationary.

In the days of superstition, these celestial wonders were viewed as portending certain destruction to nations and armies, and filled the minds even of the more enlightened with terror and dismay. At the present day, the Icelander is entirely free from such silly apprehensions, and only regards

their uncommonly vivid appearance as predicting a hurricane or storm: an observation founded on experience, and which I frequently brought to the test, when it invariably turned out, that in less than twenty-four hours after the northern lights were in great commotion, we had either sudden squalls or a heavy gale of wind from the north.

It was scarcely ever possible for me to view this phenomenon without reflecting on Job xxxvii. 22. "The golden splendour cometh out of the north;" and it seems extremely probable, that it is to them Elihu here alludes. The idea not only agrees with the light spoken of in the preceding verse, but is far more suitable to the latter clause of this same verse, "with God is terrible majesty." In some parts of Asia, the northern lights are so terrible, that "they strike the beholders with horror. Every animal is struck with terror; even the dogs of the hunters are seized with such dread, that they will fall on the ground, and remain immoveable till the cause is over." *

From the picture which the foregoing part of the journal presents of the state of the roads, and the difficulties inseparably connected with travelling in Iceland during the summer, an idea may be formed of the almost total impracticability of any such attempt in winter. The distance between the houses; the dreadful chasms and rents in the lava hidden by the snow; the rivers either choked full of ice, or but slightly frozen, with numerous other circumstances,—all combine to present obstacles, which few have the courage, or the physical strength, to surmount. In general, no Icelander undertakes a journey of greater length the whole winter than to his parish-church; and it often happens—though never without reluctance—that he must abandon even this tour for weeks together. Two posts are dispatched each season from the north, and one or two from *Reykiavik* to the eastern and western quarters of the island: otherwise, a traveller is scarcely ever heard of till near the end of winter, when the people begin to come from the north to the fishing. They then proceed across *Holtavordu heidi*, which is the

* Pennant's Arctic Zoology, Introduct. p. 1 2.

shortest desert between the north and south countries; yet they frequently suffer much from the journey, and it is seldom a winter passes without some perishing in this way. This very season several have fallen a prey to the inclemency of the weather. In a journey of this sort, it is not often that horses can be used: the traveller is obliged to trudge it on foot, to ford the rivers, if the ice should not be capable of bearing him, and, when benighted at a distance from any house, he either seeks shelter in a subterraneous cavern, or builds a house of snow, in which he reposes till the light of day again calls him to proceed on his journey. His greatest danger arises from his exposure to heavy falls of snow, by which the bearings of the mountains (his only way-marks) are concealed from view.

It appears from several of the ancient Sagas, that sledges were in pretty common use in former times in Iceland. At present they are almost wholly unknown; which will be deemed the more surprising by those who are acquainted with their utility to the Laplanders, as the island abounds with reindeer, which might easily be tamed and inured to the yoke.

Strictly speaking, there are only two seasons in Iceland, summer and winter; the former of which, short and precarious as it is, the natives must employ with assiduity, in order to make provision for the latter. From the 3d of February to the 12th of May, is what the Icelanders call the *ver-tima*, or fishing season; at which period vast numbers of the inhabitants flock to the southern and western shores from the districts in the north and east, where the fishing is generally impracticable at this time, owing to the bays and creeks being filled with polar ice. They provide themselves with a complete skin-dress, consisting of the *brok* in the shape of small clothes and stockings, all in one piece; the *stack* or large jacket, which falls down, and is tied close over the *brok*, so as to prevent the water from getting in between them; and tight-sitting shoes of the same material, below which are worn coarse woollen stockings for greater warmth. The most of them live almost entirely, during this period, on butter and fish. They breakfast about two hours before

sun-rise, and taste nothing till they return from sea in the evening, excepting sometimes a little whey, which they take with them for the purpose of quenching their thirst. The boats are generally manned with six or eight hands besides the steersman, and row sometimes to a great distance out to sea.

When they return from fishing, and land on the beach, the boat is hauled up, and the fish are thrown out and heaped together in separate parcels, according to the number of men in the boat, with two additional shares which belong to the boat, and are claimed by the owner for the use of it, and the fishing lines and hooks, which are provided at his expense. The fishermen being fatigued, repair immediately to their huts, and the splitting and carrying home of the fish is commonly left to the women and children.

The principal fish they catch in this way is the cod, which they spread out on the cliffs to dry; and from this circumstance it obtains the name of klip-fish. They cut off the heads, which they also dry, and sell to the poorer part of the population; the bones are sometimes used for feeding their cattle with; and in some parts of the island they use them for fuel. When thus prepared, the fish are laid out on the cliffs, or a large surface of flat stones on the beach, and there dried in the sun, while the utmost care is taken that they are not exposed to rain or damp. They dry in the course of three weeks, and afterwards are stacked upon the beach, and take no damage whatever from the rain.

Sometimes the fish are hung up and dried in houses called *hiallar*, which are so constructed that the wind has a free passage through them, while they are sufficiently covered to keep out the rain. The fish dried in this way are called *hengi-fiskar*, or hung fish, in distinction from the *flat-fiskar* dried on the rocks.

Besides supplying the natives with one of their most essential articles of food, they are, as provided by the sea with a valuable barter against foreign productions which they may need; and the Danish merchants not only supply, in a great measure, the north of Europe with dried cod-fish,

but send several cargoes of them to Spain, and the markets in the Mediterranean, where they are purchased for the use of the Catholics during lent.

When the snow leaves the ground, the females spread the manure which had lain on the *tûn* in heaps all winter, and collect any stones that may have gathered on it. The men are employed in cutting turf both for fuel and a covering to their houses, and making charcoal for the use of the smithy. When the young cattle have been turned out on the mountains, the care of the cows and sheep is left to the female part of the family, who milk them twice a-day, make curds, butter, cheese, &c.; and they repair in companies, about the middle of summer, to collect the *Fiallagrös*, or Lichen Islandicus, in the uninhabited parts of the country. They have, generally, a man or two with them: and the few weeks they spend in this employment in the desert, are regarded as the happiest of the whole year. They live in tents, which they remove from place to place, according to the greater or less abundance of the moss. At this time the men are either out at the fresh-water fishing, or proceeding in cavalcades to the factories, where they barter their home productions again. t articles of necessary use for the winter.

The most important branch of rural labour in Iceland is the hay-making. About the middle of July, the peasant begins to cut down the grass of the *tún*, which is immediately gathered to a convenient place, in order to dry, and after having been turned once or twice, is conveyed home on horseback to the yard, where it is made up into stacks. This hay is called *tada*, to distinguish it from the inferior sort called *uthey*, because cut in the meadows or vallies at a distance from the farms. At the poorer farms, both men and women handle the scythe; but, in general, the women only assist in making the hay after it is cut. In many parts of the island, where there is much hay, the peasants hire men from the fishing-places, to whom they give the name of *Kaupamenn*, who are paid for their labour at the rate of thirty pounds of butter per week. They cut by measure-

ment; the daily task, called *dagslátta*, being about thirty square fathoms.

Hay-harvest being over, the sheep and cattle that had been out all summer on the mountains are collected; the houses are put in a state of repair for the winter; the wood needed for domestic purposes is brought home to each farm; the turf is also taken in; and the labours of the season conclude with the removal of manure to different parts of the *tún*.

During the winter, the care of the cattle and sheep devolves entirely on the men; and consists chiefly in feeding and watering the former, which are kept in the house, while the latter are turned out in the day-time to seek their food through the snow. When the snow happens to be so deep that they cannot scrape it away themselves, the boys do it for them; and as the sustenance thus procured is exceedingly scanty, they generally get a little of the *út*, or meadow-hay, about this time. The *tada*, or farm hay, is given to the cows alone. All the horses, excepting perhaps a favourite riding horse, are left to shift for themselves the whole winter, during which season they never lie down, but rest themselves by standing in some place of shelter.

The domestic employments of this season are multiplied and various. The men are occupied in fabricating necessary implements of iron, copper, wood, &c.; and some of them are wonderfully expert, as silversmiths; their work, at times, in this branch, being only distinguishable from that done in Copenhagen by the absence of the stamp. They also prepare hides for shoes; make ropes of hair or wool; and full the woollen stuffs, which is generally effected in the following curious manner. Both ends being knocked out of a barrel, it is filled with the articles to be fulled, when it is laid on the side, and two men lie down on their backs, one at either end, with their feet in the barrel, and literally *walk* the cloth, by kicking it against each other. Smaller articles they full by placing them between their knees and breast, and then moving backwards and forwards with the body, turning them always with their hands till ready. This ac-

counts for the very awkward motion which the Icelanders almost always fall into when sitting, and from which many of them cannot refrain even in church. The fishermen full their mittens by dipping them now and then in the salt water, while plying at the oar. In some parts of the country, the men also spin and knit like the women, and some of them weave.

Besides preparing the food, the females employ their time in spinning, which is most commonly done with the spindle and distaff; knitting stockings, mittens, shirts, &c. as also in embroidering bed-covers, saddle-clothes, and cushions, which they execute with much taste, interspersing flowers and figures of various colours.

A winter evening in an Icelandic family presents a scene in the highest degree interesting and pleasing. Between three and four o'clock the lamp is hung up in the *badstofa*, or principal apartment, which answers the double purpose of a bed-chamber and sitting-room, and all the members of the family take their station, with their work in their hands, on their respective beds, all of which face each other. The master and mistress, together with the children, or other relations, occupy the beds at the inner end of the room; the rest are filled by the servants.

The work is no sooner begun, than one of the family, selected on purpose, advances to a seat near the lamp, and commences the evening lecture, which generally consists of some old saga, or such other histories as are to be obtained on the island. Being but badly supplied with printed books, the Icelanders are under the necessity of copying such as they can get the loan of, which sufficiently accounts for the fact, that most of them write a hand equal in beauty to that of the ablest writing-masters in other parts of Europe. Some specimens of their Gothic writing is scarcely inferior to copperplate. The reader is frequently interrupted, either by the head, or some of the more intelligent members of the family, who make remarks on various parts of the story, and propose questions, with a view to exercise the ingenuity of the children and servants. In some houses the

sagas are repeated by such as have got them by heart; and instances are not uncommon of itinerating historians, who gain a livelihood during the winter, by staying at different farms till they have exhausted their stock of literary knowledge. It is greatly to be deplored, that a people so distinguished by their love of science, and possessing the most favourable opportunities of cultivating it, should be destitute of the means necessary for improving them to advantage. Surely the learned in Europe, who have profited so much from the ancient labours of the Icelanders, and are now in possession of their most valuable manuscripts, are bound in justice to reciprocate, and furnish them with such books in their own language, as would make them acquainted with the more important branches of human knowledge.

The custom just described, appears to have existed among the Scandinavians from time immemorial. The person chosen as recitor was called *Thulr*, and was always celebrated for his knowledge of past events; and the dignity and pathos with which he related them. It is to him, and the seat or pulpit on which he was elevated, that Odin alludes, in the following part of the *Hâvamâl*, or "Sublime:"—

Mâl er at thylia	*'Tis time to recite*
Thular stoli â,	*From the seat of eloquence,*
Urthar brunni at;	*Close by the fountain of Urd:**
Satec oc thagthac,	*I sat and was silent,*
Sa ec oc hugthac,	*I sate and reflected,*
Hlydda ec â manna mâl.	*I listened to that which was told.*

Instead of the Sagas, some of the more pious substitute the historical books of Scripture; and as they always give the preference to poetry, most of these books have been translated into metre, chiefly with a view to this exercise.

At the conclusion of the evening labours, which are frequently continued till near midnight, the family join in sing-

* By the *Brunn*, or "fountain of Urd," the poet here means the source of wisdom, and intimates, that as he had long sat and listened to the tales of other bards, he was now qualified for the chair himself.

ing a psalm or two; after which, a chapter from some book of devotion is read, if the family be not in possession of a Bible, but where this Sacred Book exists; it is preferred to every other. A prayer is also read by the head of the family, and the exercise concludes with a psalm. Their morning devotions are conducted in a similar manner, at the lamp. When the Icelander awakes, he does not salute any person that may have slept in the room with him, but hastens to the door, and lifting up his eyes towards heaven, adores Him who made the heavens and the earth, the Author and Preserver of his being, and the source of every blessing. He then returns into the house, and salutes every one he meets with, "God grant you a good day!"

There being no parish schools, nor indeed any private establishments for the instruction of youth in Iceland, their mental culture depends entirely on the disposition and abilities of the parents. In general, however, neither of these is awanting; for the natives of this island are endowed with an excellent natural understanding; and their sense of national honour, generated by their familiar acquaintance with the character and deeds of their forefathers, spurs them to emulation, independent of the still more powerful inducement arising from the necessity and importance of religious knowledge. The children are taught their letters, either by the mother, or some other female; and when they have made some progress in reading, they are taught writing and arithmetic by the father. Every clergyman is bound to visit the different families in his parish twice or thrice a year, on which occasions he catechises both young and old; but the exercise is attended to, chiefly with a reference to the former, in order to ascertain what degree of knowledge they possess of the fundamental principles of Christianity, and on this account it is called, *at lesa fræðinn*.

These are all the means of instruction which the great bulk of the Icelandic youth enjoy; nevertheless, the love of knowledge, superinduced by the domestic habits of those who are their superiors in point of age and mental acquirements, often prompts them to build, of their own accord,

on the foundation that has thus been laid; and I have frequently been astonished at the familiarity with which many of these self-taught peasants have discoursed on subjects, which, in other countries, we should expect to hear started by those only who fill the professor's chair, or who have otherwise devoted their lives to the study of science.

On the introduction of the Reformation into the island, it was designed to establish schools at the different convents, each of which was in possession of landed property more than adequate to defray the expenses; but to what cause soever it was owing, whether difficulties were thrown in the way, by such as were still Catholics in heart, or whether it was deemed more advisable to turn the proceeds of the farms into the royal treasury, so it happened that this charitable purpose was never carried into effect. Two Latin schools, however, were founded at the episcopal sees of *Holum* and *Skalholt*, and so much landed property was appropriated to each, as enabled them to support and educate about forty scholars. At these institutions many of the Icelanders have received a good classical education, by which they have afterwards attained to a distinguished rank in the paths of literature.

In the year 1741, Bishop Harboe was sent to Iceland, for the purpose of examining the state of the churches and schools; and the alterations introduced, in consequence of his representations, were attended with very beneficial effects: but towards the close of last century, the business of the schools got involved in numerous disputes; committee was appointed after committee, for the purpose of bringing it to an issue; and, ultimately, a number of no less partial, than artful statements, effected the abolition both of the sees and the schools attached to them. All the estates by which they were supported were added to the crown, one bishop was appointed for the whole island, and, in lieu of the two seminaries, a school was established at the factory of *Reykiavik*, the teachers of which were to be paid out of the public treasury. A worse place could not have been selected for the purpose, as the young men were not only exposed to

contamination from the immorality of foreigners, but tempted to weigh every thing in the balance of lucre, and view the gratification of the senses as the summit of human felicity.

In the year 1805, this school was removed to *Bessastad*, a place only a few miles distant from *Reykiavik*, once the property of Snorro Sturluson, and long the residence of the governors of the island. The school-house is a large stone building, well adapted to the purpose; but the favourable impression made by its external appearance is soon effaced on entering the passage to the rooms, by the quantity of filth that is suffered to accumulate in every corner. The students are taught in the rooms below stairs, and have their sleeping apartments above. The same want of cleanliness appears here, as the bed-steads are filled with dried sea-weed, which gives a very disagreeable smell, and the place is so confined that no air can get admission into it. Adjoining is a small dark room, containing the library, which consists of about 1000 volumes, most of which are in the Latin, Danish, and German languages. It contains some editions of the classics, but the great bulk of the works are of theological import.

The establishment is conducted by a master, who has the title of Lector Theologiæ, and is allowed a salary of about £50 *per annum*; and two under teachers, who have annually about £30 each. Owing to the late dilapidation of the public funds, the school can only receive at present about twenty-five young men, who are taught the Latin, Greek, Danish, and Icelandic languages. Of the Hebrew, it is seldom that they learn more than the alphabet. They are also taught theology, geography, history, and arithmetic. None can be admitted to the school but such as are recommended by the clergymen of their respective parishes; and this testimonial must be submitted to the Bishop, to whose general superintendence the institution is committed.

The period allotted for instruction begins about the first of October, and lasts till the end of May, when a public examination is held in the presence of the Bishop and other

public officers, in order to ascertain the talents and proficiency of the students. The length of time they spend at the school is left undetermined, and depends entirely on the diligence and abilities of the individual. Should any, however, be so uncommonly dull, as not to pass after a fair trial of *seven* seasons, he is dismissed as incapable of tuition. Those who have acquired the needful qualifications obtain a demissus, and, after having made some farther progress under the inspection of their minister or dean, may present themselves as candidates for public offices. Very few of those who fill the pastoral office enjoy any other means of improvement. Such as have wealthier friends prosecute their studies at the university of Copenhagen, and either remain in Denmark, or return to their native island in expectation of being promoted to some of the better situations its official departments present.

It not unfrequently happens that young men of considerable parts and learning come to *Reykiavik* for ordination, who have never spent an hour at this establishment. They either learn the elements of the Latin and Greek tongues from grammars which had been put into their hands, or receive some little instruction from the minister of the parish; and by an ardent thirst for knowledge, and the force of application, they make themselves masters of a book or two of the Iliad, and the most of the Greek Testament. In many parts of the island the peasants rather choose to allow their sons to follow this method than run the risk of sending them to the south; it being a fact, that many of those who have studied there, have afterwards manifested a strong inclination towards scepticism and infidelity; an effect more directly produced, perhaps, by their intercourse with foreigners, than the instructions of their teachers. It must, nevertheless be allowed, that the use of the elemental book of Niemeyer has a great tendency to produce in the mind a culpable indifference about the distinguishing doctrines of revelation; and experience has evinced, that where this state of mind has gained ground, the tenets of

Socinianism have been embraced, and these in their turn but too naturally lead to deism and total unbelief.

In the year 1759, Jon Therkelson, formerly rector of the school at *Skalholt*, bequeathed all his landed property, besides the sum of 4000 rix-dollars, for the purpose of founding a charity school in *Gullbringe Syssel*, in which twelve poor children might receive a decent education; but the capital, which was placed out on interest in Denmark, was unfortunately lost. A second capital was produced, however, by the sale of the estates, and the school was ultimately established at *Hausastad*, a place in the vicinity of *Bessastad*, in the year 1791; and the intended number of children continued to be instructed here till a few years ago, when, in defiance of every principle of justice, and of respect for the memory of the deceased, the institution was given up, and the money appropriated to the *Bessastad* establishment.

During the long winter of eight months which I spent in Iceland, I was never farther from my lodgings than a quarter of a mile, excepting once, that I paid a visit to my worthy friend the Archdeacon at *Gardè*. The house I occupied belonged to a Danish merchant, and the uniform prospect which the light of a few hours presented to my view, embraced the bleak and rugged mountains in the *Gullbringe Syssel*, the volcano *Henglafell*, and the beautiful conic-shaped *Keilar*, with the numerous subordinate hills of a similar description in the vicinity. The cathedral also, and part of the lake behind it, with a number of the houses about the town, crowded into the scenery. Cut off from all communication with the rest of the world, completely excluded from the possibility of obtaining the least intelligence respecting those in whom I felt most deeply interested, and denied the privilege of free intercourse with a few friends of congenial views and feelings with myself, I should certainly have most keenly felt the solitude of my situation, had it not been for a good supply of books which I took with me from Copenhagen, and my employing a great part of my time in writing out the notes which I had collected

for my journal the preceding summer. What also tended in no small degree to relieve the monotony of my winter avocations, was the agreeable company of my countryman, Mr Hodgson. The acquaintance we had formed with one another on our journey to the Geysers now ripened into friendship; and our conversation, which at first principally turned on the wonders of nature, gradually ascended to the miracles of grace. We generally saw one another once a-day, and always spent one evening in the week together.

Reykiavik is unquestionably the worst place in which to spend the winter in Iceland. The tone of society is the lowest that can well be imagined. Being the resort of a number of foreigners, few of whom have had any education, and who frequent the island solely for purposes of gain, it not only presents a lamentable blank to the view of the religious observer, but is totally devoid of every source of intellectual gratification. The foreign residents generally idle away the short-lived day with the tobacco-pipe in their mouths, and spend the evening in playing at cards, and drinking punch. They have two or three balls in the course of the winter, and a play is sometimes acted by the principal inhabitants. To these purposes they appropriate the Court-house, and without ceremony take the benches out of the cathedral, to supply the want of seats. An instance has even been known of the same individual who performed one of the acts in a play till late on Saturday night, making his appearance the following morning in the pulpit, in the character of a public teacher of religion!

The influence of such a state of society on the native Icelanders, in and about *Reykiavik*, is very apparent. Too many of them seem to imbibe the same spirit, and their 'good manners' are evidently getting corrupted by the "evil communication" of the strangers by whom they are visited.

CHAP. X.

Journey through the Syssels of Borgarfiord, Myrar, Hnappadal, and Snæfellsness—Innraholm—Leyrá—Printing Office—Hvitárvellir—Staffholt—Hot Springs—Sheeppens—Volcano of Western Skardsheidi—Caves of Hytardal—Stadarhraun—Domestic Worship—Ale-wells—Elldborg, or Fortress of Fire—Stadarstad—Hot Spring of Lysuhol—Buda Volcano—Stappen—Ascent of Snæfell Vökul.

HAVING been convinced, from the facilities afforded me for ascertaining the scarcity of Bibles among the inhabitants, in the course of my journey last autumn, that the most effectual way to ensure the speedy distribution of the sacred Oracles, was to visit the different officers, both civil and ecclesiastical, and with them concert plans adapted to the local circumstances of their respective districts, I resolved to traverse, this summer (1815), such parts of the island as I had not yet visited; and, accordingly, about the beginning of May, I began to make preparations for my journey. It is true, the mountains were still covered with snow, and the roads wet, and almost impassable; and all my Icelandic friends endeavoured to persuade me that it was a month too early; but as I was heartily wearied of the long confinement and it was necessary for me to be back at *Reykiavik* by the end of June, I determined to set off, and proceed by slow stages towards the west.

It was a matter, however, of no small difficulty to obtain horses. As [redacted]ced in the foregoing Chapter, the horses of burthen in Iceland are not taken into the house, or fed with hay, during the winter, but are left to shift for themselves, by scraping away the snow, and picking up any scanty re-

mains of vegetation, or frequenting the beach at low water, and eating the sea-weed that is cast ashore. It follows, of course, that they are half starved, and are generally unfit for service before the middle of June. After having agreed with a young man from the north country to proceed with me, and provide me with horses, I had the disappointment to find that it was not in his power to stand to the agreement, owing to the leanness of the animals; and I must have been detained some weeks, had not the Chief Justice Stephensen been kind enough to furnish me with horses from his estate on the opposite side of the bay.

On the 16th of May, having packed up all my baggage, provided myself with letters from Bishop Vidalin to the different Deans and others of the clergy that lay in my way, and commended myself to the special guidance and protection of Him in whose service I was engaged, I left *Reykiavik* about ten o'clock, in a six-oared boat, which I had engaged to convey me across the bay. Leaving the small islands in the vicinity of the town, we soon came to the point of *Kialarness*, which here juts out from the base of *Mount Esian*, and is remarkable for the remains of a Hof, or idolatrous temple, erected towards the close of the ninth century, and the farm of *Esiuberg*, where the first church was built by Örlyg Rapson, a convert of Patrick, Bishop of the Hebrides, and dedicated to St Columbus, the apostle of the Picts. *

We now entered the *Whale Frith*, and had the wind almost directly a-head; yet, by hard pulling, the boatmen managed to row the boat a considerable way up the south side of the bay, when, setting the sail, we steered directly across, and a little past two o'clock landed at *Innraholm*, the estate of the Chief Justice, where, agreeably to the kind orders of that gentleman, I was received with every mark of attention by his steward, and the necessary arrangements were made for the prosecution of my journey.

The farm is very pleasantly situated on a gently rising ground, on the north side of the bay, and separated by a

* Olafsen and Povelsen, p. 75.

narrow tract of morass from the base of *Akkrafiall*, a mountain about 1500 feet in height, whose sides present a fine display of the numerous horizontal strata of which it is composed. In some places the debris covers a considerable extent of surface, but at others the beds are seen to a great depth. The appearance of the farm is vastly superior to that of the generality of Icelandic *bœar*. Next to the beach, on two small eminences, are houses of unhewn stone, for drying the fish in, and preserving the fishing implements: a little to the right stands the church, a small but convenient place of worship. The dwelling-house is neatly constructed of wood, but surrounded with earthen walls, except in front, where there are three doors, two of which open into separate rooms, while that in the middle ushers you into the common passage, from which entrances are made into the different apartments. The first room a stranger is shewn into exhibits a choice library, containing many of the more important works on law, philosophy, theology, language, &c. The other rooms are neatly finished, and furnished with stoves, an article of luxury scarcely ever to be seen at an Icelandic farm. Behind the principal building are several out-houses for the servants, with stables, barns, &c. In front is a garden, defended by a high earthen wall, which was just begun to be dug; and another, at that time preparing for potatoes, is situated at the west end of the house. The *tún* is of considerable extent, and is almost entirely free from knolls, with a good exposure; yet the verdure had scarcely begun to appear. I was not a little interested to fall in here with a water-mill, of a very simple construction; being driven by a horizontal wheel, the axle of which runs through the mill-stones, and without the aid of any other machinery performs the work.

Both the steward and his wife were unremitting in their attentions, and did every thing in their power to render my stay comfortable.

May 17. Sending on the baggage-horses round the east end of the mountain, the steward and I rode round the other end to *Garde*, where we met with a hearty welcome

from the clergyman. His parishioners are in general very poor, being chiefly dependent on the fishery, and though a great desire prevails among them to obtain copies of the Scriptures, there are few whose circumstances admit of their purchasing them. Having refreshed ourselves with a draught of excellent cream, the clergyman had the kindness to accompany us a considerable way to the west of the parsonage, through a number of dangerous bogs, which we should have found it impossible to cross, had it not been for his guidance, and the *klaki*, or frost, which still existed at no great depth. At the termination of this morass, we came to a high wall of trap rock, in many places not exceeding ten feet in breadth, having the sea on the one hand, and a low wet tract on the other. The road ran along the summit of the wall for some time, which gave us ample time to admire the barrier that has been thrown up against the fury of the waves. Passing some fishermen's huts, which were rudely constructed on the barren rocks, we came to a fine level tract, alternately presenting a surface of sand and coarse grass, over which we advanced with great celerity; but it was not long before we were again stopped in our career by swamps, that continued with little intermission for nearly two hours.

It was our intention to have rode across the inlet of the sea, called *Leiru-vog*, but we came too late for the ebb, and were obliged to ride a long way to the eastward; and, after crossing the *Laxá* and *Leyrá*, we came, about two o'clock, to the farm which takes its name from the latter river, and is in the possession of Mr Scheving, the Sysselman of *Borgarfiord*. The houses pretty much resemble those of *Innraholm*, and were built by the Chief Justice when living at this place. The pavement consists of stones formed by the depositions of a hot spring in the vicinity, and are many of them very beautiful, exhibiting curious petrifactions of shrubs, mosses, &c. There is also a church at this farm, of a better appearance than many in the neighbouring parishes.

We were here provided with an excellent dinner of boiled mutton and pan-cakes, served up by Mrs Scheving, who is

sister to Mr Stephensen; and after coffee, I exchanged guides, the Sysselman engaging to conduct me himself to the residence of the Amptman, where I intended stopping all night. At a short distance to the north-west, he pointed out to me the farm of *Leyrârgördum*, the site of the only printing-office on the island, but which is at present without employment, owing chiefly to prejudices conceived by the Icelanders against the publications which issued from it some years ago. Nor were these prejudices entirely without foundation; for many of the writings in question had but too glaring a tendency to introduce the illumination of the German school, and the attacks made on certain classes of the inhabitants were too pointed and violent not to excite indignation.

To the north-east of *Leyrâ* stretches a range of high and numerously peaked mountains called *Eastern Skardsheidi*, over which the common road lies; but the quantity of snow still found in the passes was so great, that the Sysselman did not deem it advisable to attempt them. We therefore proceeded along the base of the mountains, which here assume a very bold and majestic appearance; several horizontal strata of rock overhanging the long slope of debris, which covers more than two-thirds of their sides. In a short time we turned round the foot of *Hafnarfiall*, when we fell in with a pretty considerable wood, consisting principally of birch trees, through which we passed a little way, and then descended to the eastern shore of the *Borgarfiord*, a large and beautiful bay, from which the Syssel takes its name.

As it was low water, we shortened the distance by crossing several small inlets; and riding along the beach, we advanced with a quicker pace than if we had taken the way through the wood. We next encountered a tract of swampy ground, which occasioned us some little difficulty; and after crossing the *Andakylsâ* and passing the church and farm of *Hvanneyri*, we descended into the plains of *Hvitârvöllum*, which afford excellent pasturage, and a great quantity of hay, and arrived about eleven o'clock at the farm of the

same name, the abode of Amptman Stephensen. This gentleman I had seen in the autumn at *Reykiavik;* and in consequence of the conversation we then had about the circulation of the Scriptures, he had written an official letter to all his Sysselmen in conjunction with the Deans, ordering an inquiry to be instituted relative to the want of copies, and a report to be given of the number of those who were able and inclined to purchase, as also of such as required to be furnished gratuitously. He now received me in the most distinguished manner, and, with his lady and the whole of the family, was assiduous in providing for the comfort of the wearied traveller. After supping on excellent roast beef, a dish very uncommon in Iceland, accompanied with good Port wine, I retired to sleep, which I greatly enjoyed, having been much fatigued by the ride of the preceding day, which could not be less than thirty-six miles.

Next morning, after partaking of a cold breakfast and coffee, I took leave of the interesting family at *Hvitárvöllum*, and proceeded to the deanery of *Staffholt*. In this excursion I had the honour to be accompanied by the Amptman himself, and one of his sons, the Sysselman, and the clergyman of *Hest* with his son. A little to the north of the Amptman's we crossed the *Grimsá*, which, by mistake, is placed on the maps to the south of that farm, and after riding over the marshes, we came to the banks of the *Hvitá*, a deep and broad river, which takes its rise partly from the deserts in the interior, and partly from the ice-mountains on the northern boundary of the Syssel, and falls into the *Borgarfiord*, a few miles below this place. It has three ferries, and is sometimes fordable at other places. At one of these a very singular case happened last summer, as the people were riding to church. The horse of one of the peasants taking fright, when about the deepest part of the river, his rider was thrown into the water, and as he was at a great distance from either bank, and being, besides, ignorant of the art of swimming, the spectators gave him up for lost. Happening, however, to get on his back, and extending his hands and feet, he kept his head above water,

and was carried gently down by the stream: his companions riding along the banks, and talking with him all the while, till, after having floated near a mile, he was cast on a small sand-bank, from which, with little difficulty, he reached the shore.

On our arrival at the Ferry, I was somewhat alarmed at the leaky state of the boat, which we had to bale without intermission, in order to keep ourselves above water. In the course of an hour we reached *Staffholt*, where I was made cordially welcome by the Dean, the Reverend Peter Peterson. The parsonage is situated on a rising ground on the east side of the river *Nordurá*, and commands a noble prospect of the eastern and western *Skardsheidi* mountains, the remarkable cone of *Baula*, with two inferior ones, called by the Amptman, the "Daughter" and "Grand-daughter," and the fine serpentine windings of the river a little above it confluence with the *Hvitá*. The bleakness of the surrounding rocks was greatly enlivened by the number of swans that were swimming and singing melodiously in the river, and the clouds of steam ascending from the hot springs about two miles to the north of the farm.

On the departure of the Amptman and the rest of the company, the Dean entered into a most lively and interesting conversation with me relative to the Icelandic Scriptures, Bible Societies, the state of religion in different parts of the world, &c. when he produced the letters which he received from his clergy respecting the wants of their parishioners. The perusal of these documents convinced me of the vehement desire manifested by the people to obtain copies; while I as evidently perceived, that a great number must remain destitute of them, except furnished with them on the same terms with the salvation of the Gospel itself—"without money, and without price."

After arranging this matter, we took a ride to the hot springs, which are situate in front of a range of rocks strongly impregnated with iron. They are six in number, but none of them is of any considerable size. All of them boil with violence, and one or two erupt the water at irregular intervals to the height of a tout. Fine incrustations are form-

ed on the wood, bones, &c. which lie within the reach of the water, but, what is not a little remarkable, I did not meet with the least appearance of its having affected the grass, which grows in great luxuriance on the banks of the small steaming rivulet that flows a considerable way into the plain. As we returned, the Dean pointed out to me a bed of lignite, or the mineralized wood, to which the Icelanders give the name of *Surturbrand*, and which is found in great abundance in the west of Iceland. It is situated in the cliffs, a little to the north of the parsonage, about two feet above the ordinary brink of the *Nordurá*. The vein runs almost horizontally, is three inches in thickness, and covered with an eighteen feet bed of yellow argillaceous tuffa, above which is a hard compact rock, containing numerous crystallizations of quartz. The surturbrand is only visible to the length of thirty feet, the debris of tuffa having been washed away at this place by an extraordinary swell in the river.

At an early hour on the 19th, I ordered my horses to be got ready, and, before setting off, I had the pleasure to find, that the Dean and his son had resolved to proceed with me all the way to the next station, which lies about thirty miles distant from *Staffholt*. I was the happier at this, as I found the Dean a very conversible man, and eagerly desirous of discussing topics of a religious nature. Quitting his hospitable roof, we descended into the plain through which the *Nordurá* pursues its winding course; and proceeding about three miles along its eastern margin, we came to a ford, where, although there was a strong current, we crossed it without much difficulty. The road now lay in a westerly direction across a number of very irregular heights, in some places covered with stunted birches, and in others consisting of bleak and barren rocks, the fragments of which were intermixed with abundance of zeolite. Leaving this, we came to the entrance of a pass in the western *Skardsheidi*, where we stopped some time, in order to rest our horses, and refresh them with a little hay, which we procured from the last habitation in the tract.

In the mean time, the Dean took me to an immense ra-

vine, formed by the waters of the *Gliufrâ*, into which, on a certain day in autumn, all the sheep are collected that have been feeding at large on the mountains during the summer. The place is called *Klofa-hammars-rettar*, or the "Pens of the Cloven Precipice." An order being sent from the constable of the district, the peasants collect from their respective farms, and, under the direction of one of their number, chosen on the occasion, and to whom they give the title of "King," they proceed to the mountains, where they pitch their tents in a convenient place, and go, two in company, in search of the sheep, according to the orders of their sovereign. Having spent several days in this manner, and collected the sheep, they lift their tents, and drive the whole flock down to this place, when they are confined in the large pen, which is defended, on the one side, by the river, and on the other, by a high range of perpendicular cliffs; so that there is no possibility of their making their escape. As each farmer has his particular mark on the ear of his sheep, they are easily separated, and confined in smaller pens, called *Dilkar*, which are built of lava, and lie scattered along the south side of the river. What with the bleating of perhaps 1500 sheep, the noise made by the peasants in proving their property, and the appearance of the pens and tents which crowd the valley—this desert tract assumes, on such occasions, a most lively aspect, and furnishes a temporary relief from the silent monotony of Icelandic life.

The *heidi*, or mountain-road, lying along the sides of several gulleys, at a short distance from the *Gliufrâ*, was by no means so steep as I had apprehended. The principal difficulty we had to surmount, consisted in traversing prodigious masses of snow, which at certain places were scarcely of sufficient solidity to admit of our riding on them, and were the more dangerous, from their concealing in their interior small lakes and rivers, into which we might have been plunged in a moment, and from which there was scarcely any possibility of extrication.

Having reached the middle of the pass in safety, we found ourselves in the immediate vicinity of the extinguished vol-

cano of *Western Skardsheidi*. It is situated at the south end of *Lângârdal*, and a little to the west of the small lake, whence the water from that dale divides, and is discharged, partly through the channel of the *Lângâ*, and partly through that of the *Gliufrâ*. We had here to cross a tract of very rough lava; for, notwithstanding all that has been done to throw it up on both sides so as to form a kind of path-way, large angular masses still remain, which prove no less trying to the patience of the traveller, than hostile to the feet and shoes of his horses.

We now came to seven remarkable spiracles or chimnies, five of which are situated on the east, and two on the west side of the road. The former are small, not exceeding 40 feet in perpendicular height, and measuring from 150 to 200 feet in circumference around their base. They are complete cones, and have been hollow within for some time after the eruption; but the cinders, and other rejectamenta, having mouldered with age into the craters, they are, in a great measure, filled up, though, at the same time, they exhibit ample proof of their circular formation. The lava on the outside of these spiracles is mostly of a red colour, strongly vitrified, light, and broken into small fragments.

After we had ascended each of the cones in succession, and admired the regular uniformity of their structure, we returned to our horses, and, proceeding a little on to the west, arrived at the base of the other two chimnies, which, from their magnitude, and every other attendant circumstance, evidently appear to have been the principal craters of the volcano. The more easterly may be about 300 feet high, and is double as much around the base. Its ascent was attended with much fatigue, as our feet always sunk in the scoriæ or drosses, and these being set in motion by our weight, we often slid down again to a considerable distance before we stopped. The drosses are small, of a red colour, and very friable. On gaining the summit, the crater instantly opened upon us, situated exactly in the centre, and bearing the most perfect resemblance to an inverted cone. It appeared to be about 200 feet in diameter from brim to

brim, but not exceeding 60 feet in depth. Its sides were for the most part covered with snow, and a small hole filled with water appeared at the bottom. The brim is several feet lower towards the east; and from this place a small valley or channel, nearly of the same depth with the crater, stretches due east towards the five minor chimnies above described; which, as they all lie in the same direct line, have visibly originated in the torrent of lava poured down through this valley. On meeting with some obstruction, it has collected and formed a caldron or furnace, which, being augmented by fresh matter from the main source, has ultimately given way on the opposite side, and the lava continuing to flow, has successively thrown up the cones till it reached the fifth and smallest in the row. The heights on both sides of the valley consist of the same red scoriæ with those covering the exterior of the crater, and are sharpened towards the summit. From this crater, the lava has flowed which covers the tract to the north and east.

At a short distance farther west lies the primary chimney, or volcanic cone, at least 550 feet high, and exceeding 1800 feet in circumference around its base. The crater is proportionably large, being not less than 400 feet in diameter at the mouth, and exceeding 150 feet in depth. At the bottom were two pools filled with clear water, but of what depth I could not determine, as the snow about the sides of the crater prevented all access to them. This huge furnace opens into a small dale like the former, but it only proceeds a short way in an easterly direction, when it turns all at once to the south and south-west; and through this channel an immense stream of burning matter has rushed towards the south, where the declivitous tendency of the ground has allowed it a free descent into a fine valley, afterwards called *Hraundal* or Lava Valley, where it has flowed with great velocity and force, and been thrown up in the most singular and capricious forms. Filling the greater part of this long valley, it has continued its course into the plains, which it has inundated to a great extent, carrying destruction to every thing it attacked in its progress.

It was impossible for me to survey the scene that presented itself from the summit of this cone, without, in some measure, realising in my imagination the awful period of its activity:—the convulsive throes of the ground; the belching of the flames; the thunders of the eruption; the splashing of liquid fire; and the broad streams of devouring lava spreading themselves across the valley. As I revolved these things in my mind, I felt powerfully convinced, that in the following sublime specimens of prophetic poetry, the sacred writers have borrowed their imagery from the tremendous phenomena of a volcanic eruption: "For, behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be *molten* under him, and the vallies shall be cleft, *as wax before the fire*, and *as the waters that are poured down a steep place*." "Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might *flow down* at thy presence. As when *the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil*, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, *the mountains flowed down at thy presence*," Micah i. 3, 4. Isaiah lxiv. 1, 3. See also Nahum i. 5, 6.

Returning to the Dean, whose corpulency prevented him, much against his inclination, from accompanying us, we again mounted our steeds, and skirted the western margin of the lava, till we arrived at a narrow gulley, which it has almost completely filled, when we were obliged to ascend a steep and rugged hill of brown tuffa, from the summit of which we had a commanding view of a vast assemblage of similar hills, originally produced, and afterwards convulsed by the agency of subterraneous fires.

We now descended from the mountains through *Hraundal*, where we observed a number of beautiful and singularly grotesque domes of lava which have been thrown up during the progress of the fiery torrent; and proceeded towards the west, along the base of several bold and precipitous moun-

tains, on the opposite side of which we fell in with *Griotârdals-hraun*, another stream of lava of an extensive spread. It proceeds from a volcano of the same name, a little to the west of the *Skardsheidi* mountains, the crater of which resembles those above described, but is much larger, and surrounded by a higher perpendicular wall, exhibiting towards the south a lateral opening where the lava has had its egress. The stream is about six miles in length, and in some places three in breadth. Our path ran across it in a winding direction, now level and smooth, and now obstructed by massy crusts that have been scattered about on the bursting of the domes. The principal difficulty, however, was presented by the *Griotâ*, the waters of which are incessantly washing down large pieces of lava into the fording place, where the river falls with great violence, so that it is hardly possible for the horses to keep their feet in crossing.

About eight o'clock in the evening, we arrived at the church and parsonage of *Stadarhraun*, where I got my tent pitched as expeditiously as possible, in order to afford us a shelter from the cold, the mercury in Fahrenheit having fallen to 29°. The houses are entirely surrounded by lava except in front, and the greensward forming the *tûn* is separated from the same substance only by the depth of a few inches. The clergyman, Sira Daniel Jonson, I found to be a true Nathaniel, whose whole deportment evinced an eminent degree of simplicity and godly sincerity. He expressed, in very warm terms, the satisfaction he felt at our visit, and did all that lay in his power to provide for our accommodation.

As I had been advised by the Amptman and others to spend the Sabbath at this place; and feeling the more inclined to do so from the consideration of the sterling worth of the incumbent, I went on the 20th, in company with him and the Dean, to pay a visit to *Hytardal*, where the latter gentleman had some business to transact. It was not long before we encountered a stream of lava that has been poured down upon the low country from the volcano of *Hytardal*, situated a short way back from the upper end of the

valley. To the left we had a long range of mountains, near the termination of which projects the curious looking rocky hill in which the celebrated Grettir found an asylum. The place is called *Grettis-bæli*, is viewed as inaccessible by the present race of men, and commands an extensive view of the adjacent plains. At the distance of about four miles up the valley we came to the church of *Hytardal*, a place of considerable note in the ancient annals of the country, on account of the rich and noble families who had it in possession. In the thirteenth century it was erected into an abbey, which however soon lost its importance, and was gradually deserted. It is still among the better livings, and one of those, the grant of which the King of Denmark reserves in his own power. The church is small, but in good order, and possesses several ornaments which have been made over to it in times of popery, such as priestly vestments, images of John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary, &c. The walls of the church were formerly remarkable for the ancient figures that were hewn in them; but they are all effaced, with the exception of a huge female face, said to represent Hyt, the protectress of the valley.

We were kindly entertained by the clergyman, who, with all the company, took the most lively interest in the accounts I gave them of the progress of true religion, and the triumphs of the Bible over the pride and enmity of the abettors of infidelity. After we had spent an hour or two in this manner, we went to survey some of the natural curiosities of the valley. The first we visited was a remarkably excavated hill of tuffa, several of the veins of which are so soft, that they admit of being cut with a knife. The place is called *Nafna-klettar*, from the circumstance of its being full of names engraven in the rock by such as have visited it. We next repaired to *Hus-fell*, a rugged volcanic mountain, consisting of a sandy kind of tuffa and lava, strangely intermixed with one another, near the summit of which we entered a cave, consisting of spacious vaults, evidently formed by volcanic agency, the surface exhibiting a curious incrustation, which I take to have been produced by the dripping

of water through the tufla, till gradually hardened by the air. The cave is forty-one feet in length, by twenty-five in breadth; and the vaults are about fourteen feet in height. On being informed that it is used as a sheep-pen, and is on that account termed the *Fiârhellir*, I was reminded of the "sheep-cotes" of the cave in the wilderness of Engedi, where David cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, 1 Sam. xxiv. 3.

Close behind this cave is another, called *Saunghellir*, or "The Singing Cave"—not so much, I should suppose, from any remarkable echo observable in it, as from the custom of a psalm being always sung by those who visit it. It runs upwards into the mountain, and is about twenty-four feet in length, by twelve in width. When we had all got up into it, we prevailed on the Dean, who has a very powerful voice, to raise a psalm, which he did, and was immediately joined by the other two clergymen. It had a most solemn effect; and while they were singing, the train of my meditation led me to those times in which the fearers of God were obliged to flee from the fury of their ruthless persecutors, and hide themselves "in dens and caves of the earth;" and, when debarred the use of public worship, they caused similar caves to resound with the high praises of the Redeemer.

The *Hundahellir* is near the parsonage, and is said to connect with a vast cavern, which stretches the whole way west to the *Snæfell Yökul*, but the roof not being more than two feet high, it is impossible to enter it with any degree of ease. The idea of the long cavern has most probably originated with the fabulous account of Bârdr, the *âs*, or god of the Yökul, and the supposed connection between him and Hyt, the mistress of this valley: but when we reflect, that a regular chain of volcanic cones stretches from *Baula*, near the upper end of *Borgarfiord* Syssel, along the centre of the promontory of *Snæfellsness*, till terminated by the Yökul, which is itself a notable volcano, it will not appear at all improbable, that there does exist some subterraneous line of communication between them.

After dining at the parsonage, we accompanied the Dean

along the base of the mountains on the east side of the valley till reaching their termination, when we bade each other an affectionate farewell, and I returned with my new host to *Stadarhraun*. Having been quitted by five noisy eagles, which kept soaring at a considerable height directly over head, and which we supposed to be on the watch for some lambs that were grazing in the vicinity, Sira Daniel and I entered into an animated conversation about the all-important concerns of religion; and the longer we were together, the more I felt attached to him, and became more and more convinced of the genuineness of his piety, and the purity of his motives as a minister of the gospel of Christ. He has the care of two parishes, in one of which were only *two* copies of the Bible among *fourteen* families. Though there were two copies in his own family, two more had been subscribed for, besides several New Testaments. A poor woman, who was ignorant of her husband's having made application for a copy, came, after the list had been sent in to the Dean, and with many tears lamented her dilatoriness, and the guilt she had contracted in neglecting to avail herself of the golden opportunity;—but what was her joy on being informed, that a copy had been secured for her!

May 21st, Lord's Day. The great bulk of the population being absent at the fishing-places, there was no public worship at *Stadarhraun:* yet I was in no ordinary degree interested by witnessing the piety and devotion manifested by the clergyman and his family, eight in number, in the exercise of their domestic worship. We assembled round the altar, which was extremely simple, consisting merely of a coarse wooden table, when several appropriate psalms were sung in a very lively manner, after which a solemn and impressive prayer was offered up, the females, meanwhile, placing their hands flat on their faces, so as entirely to cover their eyes. The clergyman now read an excellent sermon on Regeneration, from Vidalin's collection, which is in great repute over the whole island, and has, perhaps, more than any thing else, contributed to perpetuate a clear and distinct knowledge of the fundamental principles of Christia-

nity among the natives. The service concluded with singing and prayer; after which, the members of the family gave each other the primitive kiss; and I could discover, from the joy that beamed in every eye, the actual increase of happiness derived from their renewed approach to the Fountain of Bliss.

Towards evening the clergyman of *Hytardal* came to conduct me to *Hytârness*, agreeably to a promise he had made me the preceding day. Close to the river *Quarnâ*, at the margin of the lava which fills the greater part of the valley, we came to a small mineral spring, which was discovered some years ago by the clergyman of *Stadarhraun*. The soil appeared to be highly impregnated with iron, and the water, which in the well was covered with a light blue slime, possessed a considerable degree of acidity. A bottle of this water, which was brought home by Sir George Mackenzie, has been chemically examined by Dr Thomson, who ascribes its peculiarities entirely to the portion of carbonate of lime which it contains. *

In the "Royal Mirror," a curious Norwegian work, supposed to have been written before the close of the twelfth century, express mention is made of a celebrated mineral spring in this valley; but whether it was situated at this spot, or higher up, cannot now be determined. The author mentions three things as remarkable about the water. When drunk in a considerable quantity, it inebriates; if the well be covered with a roof, the water leaves the place, and springs up somewhere else in the vicinity; and, lastly, though it possesses the above quality when drank at the well, on being carried away, it loses its efficacy, and becomes like other water. † Many such springs exist on both sides of the promontory. They are called by the natives *Ölkelldar*, or Ale Wells, from their taste, and the effects of the water when taken fasting. The most remarkable are those of *Raudamel*, *Stadarstad*, *Budum*, *Frodar-heidè*, *Olafsvik*, *Hrisakvt*, and *Eydum*. It is but seldom they are used.

* Travels in Iceland, 2d Edit. p. 391.

† Konge-skugg-sio. p. 163. 164. Soroe. 1768 4to

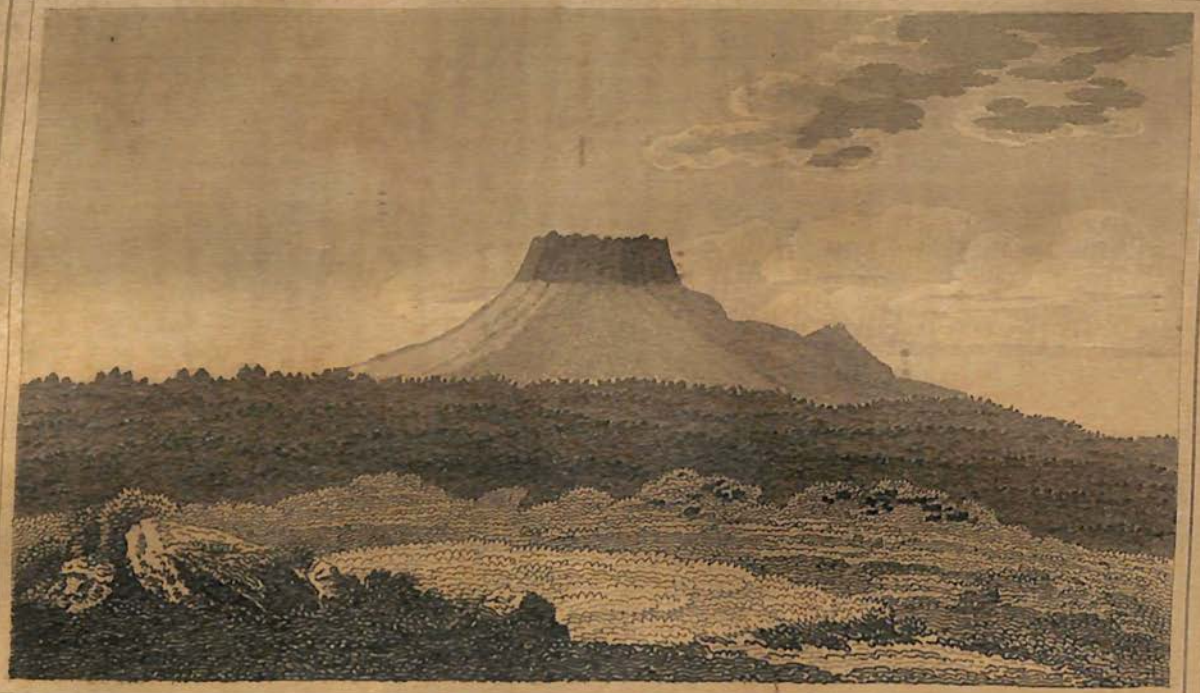
however powerful their medicinal virtues; nor were it indeed advisable for the natives to use them without proper medical directions.

Leaving the lava of *Hytardal*, we soon encountered that of *Barnaborg*, which has issued from three stupendous chimneys that have been thrown up in the middle of the plain, and present a very bold and rugged appearance. The lava seems to have run with great fury, and to have been suddenly cooled; for it is extremely rough, and it was not without imminent danger that we crossed it. About eight o'clock in the evening we arrived at *Hytârness*, and were kindly received by the clergyman and his chaplain, both of whom expressed, in very strong terms, their gratitude for the provision that had been made for the spiritual wants of their parishioners.

Next day, about noon, I prosecuted my journey towards the west, accompanied by the two clergymen just mentioned, and the minister of *Stadarhraun*, who, to use his own words, found it impossible to tear himself away from me. The morasses in front of the mountains being almost impassable, I resolved to avail myself of low water, and pass the *Lânga-fiörar*, or sands, between the mouth of *Hnappadal* and *Stadarstad*, the next station on the road. On our arrival at the beach, however, we had the disappointment to find that we had made a wrong calculation, and were obliged to stay at a neighbouring farm till the following ebb.

At the distance of about two miles due north, and completely surrounded with lava, rose the grand circular crater of *Elldborg*, which is not only remarkable on account of its singular configuration, but also because it stands quite insulated in the middle of an extensive plain, which it has almost entirely deluged with lava.

Having got the baggage taken off our horses, we set out on foot across the lava, in order to inspect more closely this curious production of nature. The walk proved very rough, and sometimes dangerous, owing to the sharp and cavernous nature of the lava. Several of the largest caves are used for sheep-pens, it being a fact that, when left to follow their



VIEW OF ELLDBORG FROM THE SOUTH.

own inclination, the sheep repair to them in preference to those constructed by man. On our arrival at the base of the volcano, we could not sufficiently admire the regularity with which it rose by a gradual acclivity till within about eighty feet of the summit, when the heath and every vestige of vegetation ceased, and a wall of dark vitrified lava rose at once in nearly a perpendicular direction, and terminated in a rough and irregular top. From the perfect resemblance of this wall to an immense artificial fortification, it has obtained the name of *Elldborg*, or "The Fortress of Fire." After having rested ourselves a little at the foot of the rampart, we began to scale it; an undertaking which we found attended with no small difficulty, the lava in many places being smooth as glass, and in others broken into minute fragments, which gave way on our stepping upon them, and often compelled us to renew our toil. At length, after several respites, we ultimately reached the summit, when we were not a little alarmed to find that we were only separated from a tremendous abyss by a dome of lava, in many places not exceeding six inches in thickness, extremely loose in its contexture, and mouldering with age into the crater, which opened like an immense basin directly before us. It is not an entire circle, but somewhat oval, its longitude stretching from E. S. E. to W. N. W. The interior of the wall is in general more perpendicular than the exterior, especially on the east side, where it consists of rugged cliffs, among which a number of ravens annually build their nests. Having encompassed the summit with a measuring-line, and found its circumference to be somewhat more than 1800 feet, we descended into the crater itself, by means of a rude defile on the south-east side, where the wall consisted entirely of thin flat plates of lava, the surface of which was cracked or broken into numerous pieces, and exhibited a strong tendency towards basaltic conformation. When at the bottom, we had a most august view of the clouds, passing in rapid succession across the heavens, which were circumscribed by the lofty walls of the volcano, towering to the height of near 200 feet above us. From about half that height the sides began

to slope, and are covered with slags, except on the west side, where there is a good deal of coarse grass, and much angelica. The crater terminates in a small aperture, situated exactly in the centre, and marking the ancient source of devastation and ruin. It is nearly filled with slags, and all around lie a number of large calcined stones, which, towards the end of the eruption, the fire has not been able to throw over the walls of the crater.

From the summit we had an extensive view of the vast plain which the lava has inundated, and higher up the opposite valley, several red volcanic cones presented themselves, which have also poured forth streams of melted substances, the largest of which are those situate in the vicinity of *Raudamel.* At a short distance from the eastern base of the mount, several small conical hills have been formed during the eruption, but they present nothing worthy of remark, their surface being entirely covered with drosses and slags. The view of *Elldborg* was taken from the farm of *Snorrastad*, at the southern extremity of the lava. The mist, in which the mountains on both sides of *Hnappadal* were enveloped, prevented their crowding into the prospect, which I was informed, would have been greatly improved by their romantic appearance.

Towards evening it grew very cold, the mercury having fallen below the point of congelation. At eight o'clock I took leave of the clergymen of *Stadarhraun* and *Hytárness*, while the chaplain of the latter place proceeded with me across the sands, from which the sea had again receded. Crossing alternately the projecting streams of lava, and the inlets of the sea which run up between them, we advanced at a noble rate; it being necessary to keep our horses every now and then at the gallop, in order to escape being overtaken by the tide, before we reached the land. At one time, we were nearly two miles from the shore; and, I must confess, I felt rather uneasy, while my companion was relating the number of travellers who had lost their lives, in consequence of their having been unexpectedly surrounded by the sea. The cold wind from the mountains on the right,

rendered the ride uncomfortable; otherwise, it was as good travelling as by day, every thing, even at midnight, appearing plain around us. About three o'clock in the morning, the immense snow and ice mountain, called *Snæfell Yökul*, came into view; at first rather dimly seen, and communicating a dunnish hue to the surrounding atmosphere; but in a short time it began to assume a more lively aspect, and continued to brighten, till the sun was fully risen, when it shone forth in all its splendour, glistening with a dazzling lustre as it received his beams, and towering to an elevation of near five thousand feet above the level of the sea.

On reaching the end of the sands, we entered an extensive plain, marshy in front of the mountains, but dry and sandy towards the sea, and here and there adorned with a few hamlets; crossing which, we barely gained the embouchure of two rivers in time to ford them, as the tide was now flowing into them with great rapidity. At half past five o'clock, we arrived at the church and parsonage of *Stadarstad*. The incumbent, Sira Gudmundr Jonson, though about sixty years of age, was already up, and giving orders to his servants about their daily tasks. He received me with every mark of attention, and, after having assisted me in pitching my tent, and ordered some refreshment from the house, he left me to enjoy the repose I so much required, after a long and hard ride.

The living of *Stadarstad* is considered to be one of the best on the island, and can only be conferred by the special sanction of his Danish Majesty. The church, parsonage, out-houses, and adjoining grounds, all wear a superior appearance. Sira Gudmundr himself, possesses more information on general subjects, than is commonly to be met with among the Icelandic clergy, and seems to excel in his knowledge of the true principles of Scripture interpretation. He was long Secretary to the late Bishop Finnson, and Dean of *Arness*, and received this living, in consideration of his learning and abilities. He still retains the title of Dean, though the functions of that office in the Syssel of *Snæfellsness* be exercised by another clergyman, who lives on the opposite

side of the peninsula. The accounts I gave him of the Bible Society, created much interest; and we spent the most of the afternoon in conversation on this subject, and others of a religious nature. He had distributed twenty copies of the New Testament of 1807 in his parishes; but he did not believe there existed more than three whole Bibles among a population of four hundred souls.

On the 24th, with a fine clear atmosphere, and much warmer than I had found it since leaving *Reykiavik*, I continued my route along the south side of the mountains which divide the peninsula, accompanied by the Dean, whose conversation I found highly entertaining and instructive. The road was excellent, lying through a tract, which at some former period has evidently been covered by the sea.

At the distance of four miles to the west of *Stadarstad*, near the base of the high pyramidic mountain *Lysuhyrna*, we visited the hot spring of *Lysuhol*, which is situated in the centre of a circular mound of no great height, but of considerable circumference, and consisting of incrustations, formed by the calcareous depositions of the spring. There is nothing remarkable about the spring itself, the water not being hotter that 90° of Fahrenheit; but many of the petrifactions of mosses, roots, and grasses, found in the vicinity, are extremely beautiful. Among other specimens which I carried away with me, was a noble imitation of a castle, consisting of numerous towers, and divided into several irregular horizontal strata, which produce a very fine effect. These petrifactions are not confined to the present spring, but extend to a great distance between it and the mountains, where a multiplicity of decayed mounds present themselves, so that the tract must at some former period have abounded in hot springs. A little to the west of the pyramid just mentioned, a stream of lava has descended into the plain; but the quantity poured down in this direction has not been great, as it is only spread over a small surface, and does not rise to any height.

The road now lay along the beach, over a fine sand, which is terminated by the *Buda* lava, at the eastern extremity of

which we came to the factory of *Budastad*, at present occupied by Mr Gudmundson, who transacts business at this station for Mr Clausen of Copenhagen. Its situation is very grotesque, being almost entirely surrounded by cracked and rugged blisters of lava, with here and there a small sward of grass, to enliven the sombreness of the scenery. We spent about an hour with Mr Gudmundson, by whom we were kindly entertained, and then entered the lava, which is very dangerous, owing to the chasms and rents which incessantly run across the path, and the gloomy caverns that present themselves on either side.

The volcano itself, known by the name of *Buda-Klettur*, is situated exactly in the middle of the plain, which it has filled with melted substances, and wears a red conical appearance, resembling other volcanic heights that are to be met with in great abundance in Iceland. As the road lay past its northern base, we stepped off, and ascended it in order to survey its structure. It has originally consisted of immense walls of lava, similar to the ramparts of *Elldborg*, but of much greater circumference, as the cone is also considerably higher than that remarkable volcano. Towards the conclusion of the eruption, however, part of the walls have fallen in, and now a double crater presents itself, instead of the original one, which is still distinctly marked by the outer rampart. A considerable part of the interior is overgrown either with grass or moss, but the summits and exterior are covered with cinders. Some of these contain beautiful specimens of volcanic glass, very much resembling diamonds.

On descending from the volcano, we entered a cavern close to the road, and advanced about thirty yards, in a direct line towards the crater; but the light failing us, we returned. At the mouth it was rather low, owing to the quantity of frozen snow in the bottom, but farther in, the roof, which exhibited a fine display of volcanic stalactites, was about ten feet above the surface of the snow, the depth of which we could not ascertain.

Having again mounted our horses, we pursued our jour-

ney across the lava, the inequalities of which retarded us not a little in our progress; however, in the course of an hour and a half, we reached its western margin, and, much to our satisfaction, exchanged it for a fine sandy plain to the south of the tracts called *Arabia* and *Hraunland*, which continued the whole way, till we gained the base of the *Yökul*, and began to ascend the stupendous cliffs that line the coast from thence to *Stappen*, and are known by the name of *Sölvahammar*. They consist, for the most part, of basaltiform lava; are about fifty or sixty feet high, and quite perpendicular; and the road lies at times so near the brink of the precipices, that it is not without great danger the traveller proceeds. Descending by a very precipitous path into a fissure formed by a stream from the mountain, the sides of which exhibited abundance of tuffa, and crossing three streams of lava, which have descended from the Yökul, we reached *Stappen*, a mercantile station belonging to Mr Hialltalin, by whom I was received in the most polite and hospitable manner.

The object of my visit to this harbour, was to ascertain how the copies of the Scriptures had been disposed of which had been sent thither last year; and it gave me great satisfaction to find Mr Hialltalin warmly attached to the cause, and that he had done every thing that lay in his power to promote the design of the Bible Society. A considerable number of copies had been sold during the winter, notwithstanding the little traffic that is carried on in Iceland at that season of the year; and the orders he had since received, exceeded the remaining number of copies. After settling the measures it would still be necessary to adopt in order to secure a complete supply for the inhabitants of this district, I took a walk with the Dean, and Mr Hialltalin, junior, to view the beautiful pillars and stacks of basaltic rock, with which the cliffs are adorned a little to the south of the harbour. They are exhibited with much accuracy in the representations given in Sir George Mackenzie's Travels; and some of them present grottoes, scarcely inferior to that of Fingal in the Western Isles of Scotland. The coincidence

too of the names, *Staffa* and *Stapi*, is not unworthy of notice, as it seems to warrant the conclusion, that they have been imposed by the same people. They literally signify a perpendicular rock, and from them our English word *steep* is evidently derived.

At *Stappen* I was as comfortably lodged, and as well entertained as I could have been in Copenhagen; though my kind host regretted the absence of his lady, who had spent the winter in Denmark, and was not yet returned. Besides the dwelling house, which is built of wood, and well furnished, there are several warehouses attached to it; and, upon the contiguous rocks, lie scattered a number of huts, which are inhabited by fishermen.

On awakening the following morning, I obtained, through the windows of my apartment, a noble view of that magnificent work of God, the stupendous *Snæfell-Yökul*, which gives name to the Syssel, and terminates the long range of mountains that stretch forward and divide the peninsula into two equal parts. I had often admired the majesty of its appearance during my stay at *Reykiavik*; but now it beetled almost directly over head. Every surrounding object seemed swallowed up by its immensity; and as the atmosphere was pure and serene, I felt the resolution powerfully confirmed, which I had formed the preceding evening, of ascending the Yökul from this place. To this I was the more easily determined, as it could be accomplished without any loss of time in the prosecution of my grand object; it being necessary for me, at all events, to spend the 25th at *Stappen*, in order to fit my horses for encountering the rough lavas of next day's journey.

There was something so animating and enticing in the idea of the expedition, that the aged Dean himself would certainly have accompanied me, had it not been impossible for him to protract his stay. His place was supplied by Mr Hialltalin, junior, who also procured three men to attend us, not so much as guides, for none of them, nor indeed any body about the place, had ever been higher than the line of perpetual snow, but to carry our provisions, and a few su-

pernumerary articles of clothing, and to assist us in case of danger.

When our design was made known to the people about the place, they shook their heads, and maintained that it was impossible to gain the summit; while some of them seemed to look upon the attempt as an act of presumptuous temerity. They regard the mountain with a kind of superstitious veneration; and find it difficult to divest their minds of the idea, that it is still haunted by Bârdr, the tutelary divinity of the Yökul, who will not fail to avenge himself on all that have the audacity to defile, with mortal breath, the pure and ethereal atmosphere of his lofty abode.

After partaking of an excellent breakfast,* and having completely equipped ourselves for the journey, we set out from *Stappen* at *eight* o'clock, the thermometer shewing 52° in the shade. Our way lay nearly due north-east, along the base of *Stappafiall*, an irregular mountain, which projects from the south side of the Yökul, and consists for the most part of tuffa and columnar lava. Numerous caverns with which it is perforated, combine with these appearances to determine its volcanic origin. On our right we had a stream of lava, which we crossed repeatedly, and proceeded up the long gulley, down which it has flowed from the Yökul. Following this track, and surmounting alternate masses of snow and rough knobby lavas, we came, about ten o'clock, to the last black spot we could discover, a huge piece of lava, on which we rested ourselves for about a quarter of an hour, in order to gain strength for the remaining and more arduous part of our excursion.

What had greatly incommoded us hitherto, was the extreme softness of the snow. We sunk in it past the knees; and though Mr H. and I walked in the prints made by the three men, we found it nearly as fatiguing as if we had made a track each for himself. The mercury had now risen to 57°; and the elevation we had gained was still considerably below the Yökul-háls, or the ridge which connects the mountain with the main body of the peninsula.

We again renewed our ascent. The surface of the snow

began to get more indurated, and though we still sunk too much to admit of our walking with ease, this inconvenience was in some measure counterbalanced by the gentleness with which the mountain rose before us. In the course of half an hour, however, the ascent became more acclivitous, and ultimately got so steep, that we were obliged to climb it in a zig-zag direction, and found it impossible to advance more than thirty or forty paces at a time, without throwing ourselves down on the snow, in order to refresh ourselves by a temporary respite. What is very remarkable, though we always felt so fatigued, that we supposed a considerable time would be required to render us vigorous again, we had not lain more than three minutes when we found ourselves as fresh and lively as ever. We now found the black silk handkerchiefs we had taken with us very useful, as the rays of the sun, reflected from the minute crystals of ice on the crust of the snow, proved extremely annoying, and must certainly have been hurtful to the organs of sight had we not used this precaution.

For some time we completely lost sight of the superior regions of the Yökul; but as we continued our progress, the most easterly peak came at length in view, and appeared to be at no great elevation above us. It was not, however, till after we had repeatedly renewed our toil, that we reached its southern base, about one o'clock. This peak is called the *Thrihyrning*, from the three minor peaks into which it is divided; and which consist of masses of congealed snow, supported by beautiful massive pillars of ice in front, which wear a brilliant green hue, and reflect the beams of the sun in the most vivid manner. We here halted near half an hour, and partook of some refreshment, after which we pursued our route towards the middle and highest peak.

The ascent now became much easier, owing to the consistence of the crust, and the more gentle rise of the mountain. The air increased in purity, and the heat sensibly declined. At the *Thrihyrning*, the mercury had fallen to 36°; and a little farther up, it stood at 33°, though there was a piercing sun, and little or no wind was perceptible

What not a little disconcerted us during this stage of our progress, was the appearance of mist gathering round the Yökul, at a considerable distance below us, which we were afraid would increase, and not only confine our prospect, but render our descent both difficult and dangerous.

We now began also to anticipate the dangerous rents and chasms in the snow, so pathetically described by former travellers; but were no less surprised than pleased to meet with only a single fissure, which did not appear to run to any great depth, and was only about four inches in breadth. Their absence, however, may be accounted for from the earliness of the season; the winter snows with which they had been drifted up remaining undissolved, and no fresh disruptions from the precipitation of the masses of snow having yet taken place. For this reason, the ascent of the Yökul must always be easier the earlier it is undertaken; though in this case the danger must be greater, as many of the old chasms may only have been partially drifted over, and, ere the traveller is aware, he may sink through a deceitful surface into an immense unfathomed abyss.

About *three* o'clock, we ultimately succeeded in reaching the base of the highest peak, when, all at once, a most tremendous precipice appeared at our feet, exceeding 2000 feet of nearly perpendicular depth, and displaying, in various parts of the profound valley of snow into which it opened, long and broad fissures running parallel with its sides. Near the middle of this awful depth we espied a huge circular aperture, the sides of which were lined with green ice, and which seemed to have been formed by a cascade, poured down from some part of the snow-bank on which we stood, though we could not discover any marks of water. This wonderful chasm ran down from between the middle and most westerly peaks, and appeared to descend to near the northern base of the mountain. Skirting the brink of the frozen precipice, we ascended the north side of the peak, but, after climbing within three or four yards of its summit, we were debarred all further progress by a perpendicular wall of icy pillars, resembling those already described,

and completely surrounding the summit, which we could reach with great ease with the end of the poles, or long walking staves in our hands.

We here formed a seat with our poles in the snow, and sat down to partake of a cold dinner, which tasted still colder from the ideas suggested by the scene around us, and the actual increase of cold in the atmosphere, the mercury having sunk to 29°. The mist that had partially encompassed the Yökul during our ascent, now completely encircled it, and prevented us from surveying the low coasts and harbours around the base of the mountain. The prospect was, nevertheless, noble and commanding. The mountains of the peninsula rose into view through the surrounding fog; the whole length of the bay of *Faxèfiord* was distinctly visible to our right, together with the Eastern and Western *Skardshcidi* mountains, *Akkrafiall*, and part of the mountains in *Gullbringe* Syssel. *Geitland's Yökul*, *Skialldbreid*, and the mountains about *Hekla*, crowded into view from the east; while, from the termination of the range of mountains that divides the peninsula, stretched the *Breidafiord*, studded with an innumerable multitude of singular-looking islands. The mountains of *Bardastrand* and *Isafiord* bounded the prospect towards the north, among which the *Glàma* and *Drángá* Yökuls shone with great splendour. The view to the west was only confined by our limited powers of vision, and certainly extended beyond half the intervening distance between Iceland and Greenland. What added to the interest excited by so extensive a prospect, was the beautiful girdle of clouds which surrounded the Yökul, at least 3000 feet below us. The atmospherical fluid felt uncommonly pure; and the pleasurable sensations produced by the reflection that we had attained the object of our enterprize, in spite even of our own misgivings, tended, in no small degree, to cheer and exhilarate our minds.

On surveying such an immense snow mountain, it is impossible not to feel the force of the Scripture appeal: "Will the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? or the inundating cold flowing waters be exhausted? Jerem. xviii

14. Much less can HE fail, who is the ancient of days, and the rock of ages, the fountain of living waters, and the God of all comfort and consolation. Every sublunary object must undergo vicissitude and decay; the whole of the mundane system shall one day present a scene of universal ruin: but "HE remaineth the same, and HIS years shall have no end," Psalm cii. 27.

Having examined the compass, and found it exactly to correspond with the sun, we began to retrace our steps, which, from their depth, were plain before us, so that there was no danger of losing our way. We found the descent extremely easy; and in little more than three hours from our leaving the summit of the Yökul, we again found ourselves at *Stappen*, where we were welcomed by the inhabitants; but it was not till the following morning that the common people would believe the protestations of our attendants, that we had actually reached the middle peak.

Engraved by R. Scott Edin.

SNÆFELL YÖKUL, AS SEEN FROM THE SEA.

CHAP. XI.

Journey through the Syssel of Snæfellsness continued—Volcanic Remains—Ingialldshvol—Ennit—Olafsvik—Bulandshöfdi—Grundarfiord—Mode of Interment—Runic Epitaphs—Berserkia Lava and Cairn—Stickesholm—Thorsness—Temple of Thor—Mode of Sacrificing, and Origin of Toasts—Helgafell—Thingvalla—Stone of Sacrifice—Ancient and Modern Hospitality of the Icelanders—Discovery of Greenland—Snoksdal.

I LEFT *Stappen* on the 26th, accompanied by Mr Hialltalin, and proceeded round the Yökul, across some of the highest lavas to be met with on the island. The stage might be about twenty-four miles, yet we had scarcely any thing but lava the whole day. At a short distance from *Stappen* we encountered two streams, the one of which has run above the other, and consists of a very compact lava, which assumes in some places a prismatic form, and displays on its surface a number of beautiful white specks, resembling the finest embroidery. On striking it with a hammer, it gives a sound like metal. To our left we had the *Londrângar*, two curious-looking natural obelisks, of a prodigious height, that of the highest being not less than 240 feet. They are of no great diameter, and stand almost close together. Numerous red conical hills line the coast around the Yökul. Several of them are of considerable magnitude, and must owe their origin to the breaking forth of fire from the subterraneous caverns, which, with great probability, are supposed to stretch from under the sea to the centre of the Yökul. What tends strongly to confirm this hypothesis, is the fact, that, notwithstanding the immense quantity

of snow that must annually be melted by the heat of the sun, no river of any size is found to flow from the Yökul.

The peninsula here terminates in a point called *Öndverdtness*, on both sides of which are several fishing-places, which are very conveniently situated, as the sea abounds with great plenty of fish at this place. *

At seven in the evening we arrived at the farm of *Ingialldshvol*, which is occupied by Mr Scheving, the administrator of the royal domains in this part of the island. We did not find him at home, but his wife and two daughters received us in the most courteous manner, and instantly served up a dram of Jamaica rum and coffee. It was interesting to observe the degree of taste with which the houses, originally of Icelandic construction, had been improved; and the manners of the family, though strictly national, seemed not a little raised above the common standard. The church at this place is next, in point of size, to the edifices at *Holum* and *Reykiavik*. It is constructed of wood, but begins to fall into decay for want of a new coating of tar. The *tûn* is also very extensive, and entirely free from knolls, a thing rather uncommon in Iceland. Before retiring to rest, I had a visit from the clergyman, who informed me, that in the two parishes forming his charge are nearly 1000 souls, a disproportion which arises from the number of fishing hamlets, whose inhabitants depend entirely on the produce of the sea. They are in general very poor; and, from every account, it would appear, that, in point of moral character, they are far behind those who confine their attention to the management of their flocks. Being often prevented from going to sea by the prevalence of stormy weather, they contract a habit of idleness, in the train of which, drunkenness, impurity, and other vices, but too commonly follow. These evils have of late increased to such a degree in the Syssel of *Snæfellsness*, that those in power found themselves obliged to interfere, and call the offenders to account; but connivance, partiality, and the want of cordial and perse-

* Sometimes an immense number of whales enter the *Breidafiord*. About three years ago, upwards of 1600 were driven on its southern shores.

vering co-operation, have rendered the measures abortive that were designed to effect a reformation of manners. Upwards of thirty Bibles, and a number of New Testaments, had been sold at this place.

On the 27th, I again set out from *Ingialldshvol*, in company with the two daughters of the administrator, the clergyman, and Mr Hialltalin, who would not leave me till we reached *Olafsvik*. The ladies, dressed in their Sunday habit, were lifted on their ponies, and galloped away, apparently as little intimidated as the ladies in the neighbourhood of the Don. Their saddles were surrounded by a strong rim behind, over which hung an elegant coverlet, exhibiting some fine specimens of embroidery. The road was at first rather boggy, but we soon gained the sand which forms the beach, and advanced with considerable speed till we reached the base of a huge projecting mountain called *Ennit*, when we were obliged to alight, and suffer our horses to find the road as well as they could, across the large stones that have been dislodged on the beach.

The pass at this place is justly considered to be one of the most dangerous in Iceland. The mountain is about 2500 feet in height, presenting the most rugged and frightful appearance imaginable in front, and seems to be extremely irregular in its formation. Its principal ingredient is a brown tuffa, alternating with different kinds of lava, sandstone, and clay. The sea having eat away a considerable part of its base, numerous holes and caverns present themselves; and its sides being perpendicular, there is no possibility of passing it except at low water, and even then the sea only recedes to a short distance; so that though the traveller keeps close to the water, he still runs great risk of being crushed to atoms by the stones falling from the mountain. Numbers have actually lost their lives here; and many of the natives prefer a long circuitous route along the south side of the peninsula to this short but difficult pass. It was not without impressions of terror that I ventured below the beetling cliffs, many of which appeared to be almost entirely disengaged from the mountain, and in anxiety

was greatly increased on witnessing the stones that had tumbled down during the ebb. However, as the ladies proceeded without intimidation, it would have argued a great want of fortitude not to have followed.

About noon we reached *Olafsvik*, a factory belonging to Mr Clausen, and were hospitably entertained by his factor. It consists of two very respectable dwelling-houses, several warehouses, and a number of small Icelandic hamlets that lie at different distances behind the place. I here fell in with the Dean of the Syssel, the very Reverend Mr Thorgrimson, who had proceeded this length on a visitation. It was with much regret I learned this circumstance, as I had laid my account with spending the Lord's day at his place, and hearing him preach. He is considered to be one of the more able preachers in the island, and is one of the few who deliver their discourses from memory:—it being almost universally the custom with the clergy to read their sermons, which deprives them of that life and energy which generally accompany the address of an unshackled speaker. My regret was augmented the longer I was in his company; for I found him to be a truly serious man, sedate and deliberate in his turn of mind, of considerable learning, and possessing sound ideas on the grand fundamental articles of the Christian faith. What he said was always well weighed, and expressed in the most appropriate words. He soon took an opportunity of expressing his approbation of the exertions now making for the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures, and his gratitude for what had been done for the inhabitants of his Deanery in particular. It was entirely out of his power to return with me, as he had an appointment for the following day; but he had the kindness to accompany me about four miles along the coast to the fishing village of *Völlum*, where we parted, after mutually wishing each other the divine blessing and protection.

I now rode on with the clergyman of *Ingialldshvol* to a rich farm called *Mâfahlid*, the proprietor of which shewed every disposition to serve me, and ordered one of his sons to proceed with me as far as *Grundarfiord*, where I intended

stopping all night. From the fine road along the beach, which I travelled with ease and pleasure, I had soon to mount the horrid pass of *Bulandshöfdi*, which, in point of difficulty and danger, may almost vie with that of *Ennit*. The mountain is nearly 2000 feet high: its front presents several horizontal strata of tuffa, and vertical pillars of basaltic rock, to the depth of about 200 feet, when a bed of debris commences, and falls with a rapid descent to the brink of the lofty precipices which gird the sea at the base of the mountain.

The only road which it is possible to pass lies up across this debris, and rises at the highest to nearly 1000 feet above the level of the sea, which dashes with tremendous roar almost directly below the traveller. The road itself we found in some places invisible; recent depositions of gravel from the impending rocks having obliterated it, and every step the horses took threatened with us inevitable destruction, as they had no secure footing, and there was no manner of barrier to prevent us from rolling into the abyss. Our principal difficulty, however, was occasioned by a deep indentation cut by the mountain torrent, which was nearly full of frozen snow, in crossing which, one of the baggage-horses missed a foot, and sliding down upon the ice, I must have given him up for lost, had he not gained a heap of debris, which held him with difficulty till he was caught by the servant, and drawn up again into the path. On proceeding along this dangerous route, most of the Icelanders walk behind their horses, holding them by the tails, and taking care not to look down into the sea.

Having gained the summit of the pass, we again began to descend on the other side, admiring the grandeur of the mountain scenery which here presented itself to our view. Directly before us lay the Coffin and Sugar-loaf, so called from their striking resemblance to these objects, and to our right projected a number of bold and precipitous mountains, whose curiously diversified forms seemed to mock the works of art, and whose sides were evident marks of primitive formation; for how much soever they were divided the sites

of the horizontal beds, of which they are composed, exactly corresponded to each other.

At nine o'clock in the evening I arrived at *Grundarfiord*,* which lies at the termination of a small bay of the same name, and is built on a high bank of gravel that has been thrown up by the sea. It is inhabited by Mr Helagson, the factor of Mr Clausen, a native Icelander, who, in spite of his connections with foreigners, retains both in his person and family the genuine simplicity of the native character, and possesses in no ordinary degree that hospitable disposition by which his countrymen are so generally distinguished. He had already received two travellers, yet he made me as welcome as if I had been the only person that had visited the place in the course of half a century.

Owing to the stony nature of the ground, I had some difficulty in getting my tent pitched; and in the course of the night it was nearly blown down, by sudden and violent squalls from the adjacent mountains. About five in the morning, I was alarmed by a noise louder than thunder, which seemed to be close to the tent; and on drawing aside the curtain, I found that a disruption had taken place in the face of a mountain at no great distance. The air was nearly darkened with the quantity of dust that was borne upwards by the wind, and immense masses of rock were hurled down, tearing the ground as they rolled along, and, giving a fresh impulse to the rocks and gravel that had already fallen, the whole rushed down with amazing velocity into the plain.

The 28th being the Lord's day, I rode with Mr Helagson to the church of *Setberg*, which lies on the east side of the bay, and is the residence of the Dean. I was here received by one of his daughters, who instantly presented me with coffee, and the chaplain, a son of the aged minister of *Thingvalla*, bade me welcome to the place. Before the commencement of public worship some time was taken up with a funeral.

* The Danes call this place and the bay *Grönnafiord*, or the Green Frith; whereas the Icelandic appellation literally signifies the Shallow Frith, and is derived from the banks which abound in it.

It is the custom in Iceland to remove the corpse as soon as possible to church, where it is suffered to remain till the day of interment. When a person happens to die in the vicinity of the church, he is wrapped in wadmel, and placed on a bench beside the altar, till a coffin can be got ready:—a custom of very ancient date, as traces of it are to be met with in the Eyrbyggia Saga, about the time Christianity was introduced into the island.* It would also appear from the same Saga, that it was customary in those days to place the coffin on a sledge drawn by oxen; but as this mode of conveyance is entirely out of use at the present day, the Icelanders now carry it on horseback, as the Jews did the body of Amaziah. "And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David," 2 Kings xiv. 20. In the winter season, interments are attended with considerable difficulty; as it takes three or four people a whole day to dig a grave, owing to the depth of the frost. In many parts of the island, where the people are at a distance from any church, they preserve the corpse the whole winter in a cellar, and inter it the following spring.

The funeral service begins with a psalm, which is sung while the procession advances towards the grave; the men having their heads uncovered, and the females covering their faces almost entirely with their handkerchiefs. After the coffin has been deposited in the grave, the priest throws three shovels full of earth upon it, repeating the words: "From dust thou art taken; to dust thou shalt return; and from the dust shalt thou rise again at the last day." While the grave is filling, the company sing a psalm or two suited to the occasion. One of the servants belonging to the farm whence the corpse had been brought, entered the grave after a small portion of earth had been thrown in, and continued to tramp it down with his feet:—an action that naturally produced a very abhorrent feeling in my mind, and added to the common but perhaps unjust prejudice that is entertained against those whose lot it is to perform the last offices of humanity. The females knelt, in the mean time,

* Cap. 57. and 63.

on the surrounding graves; and when all was finished, the father of the deceased threw himself prostrate on the grave, and continued in that posture for the space of eight or ten minutes; but whether his prayer regarded the soul of the departed, or the important uses to be made of this solemn event by the living, was more than I could determine.

The discourse of the chaplain, which turned on a future state of retribution, was plain and edifying; and the sacramental table was crowded with communicants, who appeared to be deeply affected by the solemn exercise in which they were engaged.

On my return from church, it began to blow with such violence that I was obliged to take down my tent, and lodge with Mr Helgason. In the evening I received a visit from the Sysselman, who gave me an account of the steps that had been taken for facilitating the distribution of the Scriptures, and he assured me that nothing should be left undone that might carry the views of the Society into effect.

Monday, the 29th, I bade farewell to my kind entertainers at *Grundarfiord*, and prosecuted my journey towards the east, under the guidance of the Sysselman. On passing *Setberg* we were joined by the chaplain, and rode on to *Hallbiarnareyri*, the former dwelling of the Sysselman, where we were treated with coffee by the present occupant of the farm. While my two companions were shoeing one of their horses, a task that all the Icelanders are capable of performing, and which none of them thinks beneath his dignity, I copied and deciphered two Runic epitaphs that were lying at the door. They are inscribed on stones of light brown basalt, which are supposed to have been taken from a mountain at a short distance to the eastward, as it abounds with the same kind of basaltic pillars. The largest is hexagonal, and measures exactly two Danish ells in length, by seven inches at the greatest diameter. It is broken near the middle, which has caused a rasure in the inscription, but the remainder of the name leads to the discovery of the defective letters

ᚼᛏᚱ ᚼᚢᛁᛚᛏᚱ ᛁ ᛁᛘᛏᚱᛏᚢᚱ ᚹᚢᚾᚾᛁᚱᛏᛏᛁᚱ
ᚾᚹ ᛒᛁᛏᛁᛏ ᚠᛁᚱᛁᚱ ᛘᛏᚱ

Her hviler Fridgerdur Gunnarsdottir
og bidid firir mer.

"Here rests Fridgerdur Gunnar's daughter; and pray for me."

The other basalt is heptagonal, six inches in diameter, and an ell and a half in length. The inscription is shorter, and the name appears to be foreign:

ᚼᛏᚱ ᚼᚢᛁᛁᛏᚱ ᛘᛁᚱᚠᚱᛏᛁ ᚠᛏᛁᚱᛘ

Her hviler Marfreda Feirm.

"Here rests Marfreda Feirm."

The former of these inscriptions sufficiently indicates that it was made before the Reformation, about which time a church that formerly stood here was razed; and the church-yard having disappeared, the stones remained concealed till last summer, when they were discovered by the peasant, as he was taking up part of the burying-ground in order to enlarge his garden.

It still remains to be decided by antiquaries, why so few Runic inscriptions are found in Iceland; whereas they are widely spread over Scandinavia, from which that island received its inhabitants. The frequent mention of runes in the more ancient or poetic Edda, shews that they were familiarly known in that island, at least before the eleventh century. They also occur in several of the Sagas, though not in connection with the interment of the dead; yet not above eight or ten epitaphs have hitherto been discovered, and of these the greater number are of recent date.

The two gentlemen accompanied me to the termination of the *Kolgrafarfiord*, where we overtook the man that had the care of my baggage-horses, and I proceeded with him up a short, but very steep mountain-road, called *Tröllahals*, or the Giant's Neck, descending from which we [illegible] a pretty

extensive valley, ornamented with a few cottages, and divided towards the east by the *Hraunfiord*, which derives its name from the circumstance of its having been almost entirely crossed by a stream of lava that has only left a small strait on the north side, through which the sea ebbs and flows. The blackness of the lava was finely contrasted by the prodigious number of swans that were swimming in the bay. The lava itself wears a very rugged and melancholy appearance, and the path across it is extremely rough and annoying to travellers. About the middle of the tract my horse threw me, and my feet getting entangled in the stirrups, I every moment expected he would have trampled upon me, but in the good providence of God I escaped unhurt.

We next entered a tract of red volcanic cinders, and skirted the base of a large conical hill of the same colour. Several more cones were visible to the right, the direction in which the stream of lava has descended from the original crater, which I could plainly descry among the mountains. Passing a solitary farm near the margin of the lava, we encountered the famous arm called the *Berserkia lava*, from the path and fence that were laid across it by two Swedes of gigantic prowess, towards the close of the tenth century. *

* The narrative of the circumstances connected with this singular transaction is preserved in Eyrbyggia Saga, the substance of which has lately been given to the British public by Walter Scott, Esq. As it will convey to the reader a fair specimen of the Sagas, I shall here insert his translation, only taking the liberty to alter a phrase or two, in order to render it more conformable to the original.

"While Vermund Mioti, of *Biarnarhafn*, a harbour in the vicinity, spent a winter with Count Hacon, at that time regent of Norway, there happened to be at the court two of those remarkable champions, called Berserkir, men who, by moral or physical excitation of some kind or other, were wont to work themselves into a state of phrensy, during which they atchieved deeds passing human strength, and rushed, without sense of danger, or feeling of pain, upon every species of danger that could be opposed to them. Vermund contracted a sort of friendship with these champions, who, unless when seized with their fits of fury, were not altogether discourteous or evil disposed. But as any contradiction was apt to excite their stormy passions, their company could not be called very safe or commodious. Vermund, however, who now desired to return to Iceland, conceived that the support of the two Berserkir would be of the greatest advantage to him, as they would enable him to control his brother, who had

When we had gained the highest part of the lava, I obtained a view of the fences running completely across it; and in some places apparently of considerable height. The path itself is the best I have seen through any lava in Iceland.

acted unjustly towards him in regard to his patrimony; and, therefore, when, at his departure, Count Hacon, according to custom, offered him any reasonable boon which he might require, he prayed that he would permit these two champions to accompany him to his native country. The Count assented, but not without shewing him the danger of his request. "Though they have rendered me obedient service," said Hacon, "they will be reluctant and disobedient stipendiaries to a person of meaner station." Vermund, however, grasped at the permission of the Count, though reluctantly granted, and was profuse in promises to Halli and Leikner, providing they would accompany him to Iceland. They frankly objected the poverty of the country, yet agreed to go thither, apprising their conductor at the same time, that their friendship would not endure long, if he refused them any boon which it was in his power to grant, and which they might choose to demand. Having finally agreed, they set sail for Iceland; but Vermund soon found reason to repent of his choice, and began to think of transferring his troublesome and ungovernable satellites to his brother Arngrim, who was surnamed Styr, on account of his fierce and quarrelsome disposition. It was no easy matter, however, to prevail upon Styr to accept of the patronage of the Berserkir. In vain Vermund protested that he gifted him with two such champions as would enable him to become an easy victor in every quarrel he might engage in; and that he designed this present as a gage of their fraternal union. Styr expressed his happiness at the prospect of their becoming better friends; but intimated, that he had heard enough of the disposition of these foreign warriors to satisfy him, that they would be rather embarrassing than useful dependents, and was fully determined never to admit them within his family. Vermund was, therefore, obliged to change his tone; to acknowledge the dread in which he stood of the Berserkir, and request his brother's advice and assistance to rid him of them. "That," answered Styr, "is a different proposal. I could never have accepted them as a pledge of favour or friendship; but, to relieve thee from danger and difficulty, I am content to encumber myself with the charge of thine associates." The next point was to reconcile the Berserkir, (who might resent being transferred, like bondmen, from the one brother to the other,) to this change of masters. The warlike and fierce disposition of Styr, seemed, however, so much more suitable to their own than that of Vermund, that they speedily acquiesced; and accompanying their new patron upon a nocturnal expedition, evinced their strength in breaking to pieces a strong wooden frame or bed, in which his enemy had taken refuge, so that Styr had an opportunity of slaying him.

"The presumption of Halli, however, soon discomposed their union. The champion cast the eyes of affection on Asdisa, the daughter of his patron, a young, haughty, fiery, and robust damsel, well qualified to captivate the heart of a Berserk. He formally announced to Styr, that he demanded her hand in

Its formation has certainly been accompanied with immense labour; and little short of what we fancy the strength of a giant would be required to move many of the masses of lava that have been raised on either side. About the middle of

marriage; that a refusal would be a breach of their friendship; but that if he would accept of his alliance, he and his brother would render him the most powerful man in Iceland. At this unexpected proposal, Styr for a time remained silent, considering how best he might evade the presumptuous demand of this frantic champion; and at length observed, that the friends of his family must be consulted upon his daughter's establishment. "Three days space," answered Halli, "will suffice for that purpose; and be mindful that our friendship depends on thine answer." Next morning, Styr rode to *Helgafell*, to consult the experience of the Pontiff Snorro. When Snorro learned that he came to ask advice, "Let us ascend," he said, "the sacred mount, for such counsels as are taken on that holy spot rarely prove unpropitious." They remained in deep conference on the mount of Thor until evening, nor did any one know the purpose which they agitated; but what followed sufficiently shows the nature of the counsels suggested upon the holy ground. Styr, so soon as he returned home, announced to Halli his expectation, that since he could not redeem his bride by payment of a sum of money as was usual, he should substitute in lieu thereof, according to ancient right and custom, the performance of some unusual and difficult task. "And what shall that task be?" demanded the suitor.—"Thou shalt form," said Styr, "a path across the lava to *Biarnarhafn*, and a fence between my pasture-grounds and those of my neighbours; also, thou shalt construct a house on this side of the lava for the reception of my flocks, and these tasks accomplished, thou shalt have Asdisa to wife."—"Though unaccustomed to such servile toil," replied the Berserk, "I accept of the terms thou hast offered." And by the assistance of his brother, he accomplished the path required, a work of the most stupendous masculine labour, and erected the bound-fence, which may be seen at this day; and while they were labouring at the stable for the flocks, Styr caused his servants to construct a subterranean bath, so contrived, that it could on a sudden be deluged with boiling water, and heated to a suffocating degree.

"The stipulated task being ended, the champions returned to the dwelling of Styr. They were extremely exhausted, a [illegible] common with persons of their condition, whose profuse expenditure of strength and spirits induced a proportional degree of relaxation after severe labour. They, therefore, gladly accepted Styr's proposal, that they should occupy the newly-constructed bath. When they had entered, their insidious patron caused the trap-door to be locked, and a newly stripped bullock's skin to be laid on the stair, and then proceeded to pour in scalding water through a window above the stove, so that the bath was heated to an intolerable pitch. The unfortunate Berserkir endeavoured to break out, and Halli succeeded in forcing the door, but his feet being entangled in the slippery hide, he was stabbed by Styr ere he could make any defence: His brother attempting the entrance, was forced back headlong into the bath,

the tract we descended into a deep glen, where we found the *Berserkia-dis*, or the cairn beneath which the Berserkir lie interred. It is situated on the north side of the road, and may be about twenty feet in length, six in breadth, and four in height. It consists of larger stones towards the base; but the superior regions are made up of small stones that have been thrown upon it, from time to time, by those that have passed this way. This custom, which obtains at this day in the north of Scotland, in Sweden, and many other countries, is found to have prevailed in the time of Herodotus: and some learned men are of opinion, that an allusion is made to it by Job, when speaking of the ברוש *Gadish*, or tumulus of the wicked. "And every man shall draw out (the stone he hath taken with him on purpose, and throw it) after him, as there were innumerable before him," Job xxi. 33.

At the termination of the lava, my guide pointed out to me the cottage of *Hraun*, which was inhabited by Styr, and several other places mentioned in the Saga. He had the story completely by heart, and finding that I took some degree of interest in the scenery, he proceeded to relate the different circumstances, in a strain of eloquence that perfectly astonished me; nor is it easy to say when his national enthusiasm might have been arrested, had we not arrived at the farm of *Kongsbacka*, where I pitched my tent under the lee of the house, and was kindly treated by the inhabitants.

and thus both perished. Styr caused their bodies to be interred in a glen in the lava, close to the road, and of such depth that nothing but the sky was visible from its recesses. Then Styr composed this song concerning his exploit:

"Synduz mer, sem myndi,	"*These champions from beyond the main,*
Moteflendr Spiota;	*Of Iceland's sons I deem'd the bane,*
Ala ekki dælir,	*Nor fear'd I to endure the harm*
El-herdendum verda.	*And frantic fury of their arm;*
Uggi ek eigi Seggia	*But [illegible] queror, [illegible] this valley's gloom*
Ofrgang vid mik strangan:	*To be the grim Berserkis' tomb.*"
Nu hefir bilgröndudr branda	
Berserkium stad merktan."	

Eyrbyggia Saga, caps. xxv and xx iii. and *Illustrations* [illegible] *Antiquities*, p. 489—492.

Early in the morning of the 30th, I set off for the factory of *Stickesholm*, to reach which it was necessary for me to turn a number of small bays and creeks, which protrude between that place and the rest of the peninsula. The intervening grounds form the small peninsula of *Thorsness*, famous for its having been dedicated to Thor, the Scandinavian deity, and the cruel rites of a bloody superstition, which continued to be practised here until the introduction of Christianity.

It was taken possession of in the year 883, by Thorolf, surnamed *Mostrarskegg*, from his prodigious beard, a Norwegian magnate of distinguished liberality, who kept the temple of Thor on the island of *Mostur*, to whose service he was zealously addicted. Having incurred the resentment of Haralld, King of Norway, by harbouring a nobleman who had been exiled by that prince, he resolved to emigrate to Iceland; but, previous to his departure, he deemed it advisable to consult the oracle of Thor, as to the eligibility of his proceeding to that island, or reconciling himself with the King. In order to render the Thunderer propitious, Thorolf offered an immense sacrifice, and received a response, authorising his change of habitation. He now prepared for his voyage, and took with him, not only the most of his effects, but also the temple of Thor, and the very earth on which the altar of that idol had been erected. On his arrival in the *Faxafiord*, he cast the posts of the throne, which had stood in the temple, and on one of which the image of Thor was sculptured, into the sea, and, following them round the promontory of *Snafellsness*, he entered the opposite bay, to which, from its extreme breadth, he gave the name of *Breidafiord*.

The posts having drifted to the southern shores of the bay, were cast up near this place, where Thorolf landed, and proceeded immediately to take formal possession of the coast, which was done, according to a custom prevalent in those days, by walking with a burning firebrand in his hand, round the lands he intended to occupy, and marking their

boundaries by setting fire to the grass.* He then built a large house near the shores of *Hofsvog*, or the Temple Bay, and raised a spacious temple *(hof)* to Thor, having a door on each side, and towards the inner end were erected the principal posts before mentioned, in which the *regin-naglar*, or nails of the divinity, were fixed. Within these pillars was a sacred asylum, with an altar in the middle, on which was placed a solid ring of silver, two ounces in weight, to be used in the administration of oaths, and worn by the chief in all the public meetings of the people. There was also placed beside the altar, the bason for receiving the blood of the sacrifices (*hlautbolli*), with the instrument of sprinkling (*hlauttein*); and around it stood, in separate niches, the several idols worshipped by the Scandinavians. On the establishment of this temple, a decree was issued by Thorolf, that every one should pay a certain tribute to the temple, to enable him to procure the sacrifices, and maintain the necessary rites of worship.† The site of the temple is still

* The same custom obtained in the Western Islands of Scotland till the end of the seventeenth century. See MARTIN's *Western Islands*, p. 117, London, 1716, 8vo.

† The following description of the nature of Scandinavian idolatry, from the pen of Snorro Sturluson, will not only remind the reader of 1 Corinth. viii. and x. 14—33. but shew him the origin of health-drinking as it is still practised in different countries of Europe:

"Sigurd, Earl of Lada, was the greatest idolater, as his father Hacon had been before him, and most strenuously kept up all the sacrificial feasts in *Thrandelag*, in the capacity of the King's vicegerent. It was an ancient custom, when sacrifice was to be offered, that the whole community assembled at the temple, and brought with them whatever they needed during the feast. It was also particularly ordained, that every man should have ale in his possession. On such occasions, they not only killed all kinds of small cattle, but also horses, and all the blood obtained by this means was called *blaut*; the vessels containing it were called *blautboller*, and the instruments of aspersion, *blautteinar*. With these they sprinkled all the supporters of the idols, and the walls of the temple both externally and internally, as also the people that were assembled, with the blood of the sacrifices: but the flesh was boiled and used for food. In the middle of the floor of the temple was a fire, over which kettles were suspended, and full cups were borne round the fire to the guests. It was the office of the pontiff, or the master of the feast, to bless the cup and all the meat offered in sacrifice. The first bumper (Icel. *full*, a full cup) was drunk to *Odin*, for victory in battle, and the prosperity of his government; the second and third were drunk to *Niörd*

shewn, close to the hamlet *Hofstad*, on the west side of the peninsula.

About noon I arrived at the western base of *Helgafell*,* a low mountain, consisting of trapp, or an irregular kind of basalt, perpendicular on the north and east sides, but accessible from the west and south, where it is for the most part covered with grass. To this mountain Thorolf attached such a peculiar degree of sanctity, that he not only gave it the name of the Holy Mount, by way of distinction, but enacted a law, that no person should presume to look towards it without having previously performed an ablution; nor was any animal to be killed upon it under penalty of death. He also regarded it as the hill of immortality, and entertained the belief that he should dwell there in a future life, along with all his relations who inhabited *Thorsness*.

Leaving the baggage-horses to bait a little at the foot of the mountain, I rode on to the church and parsonage of *Helgafell*, where I was received by the chaplain, in whose house I found one of the best libraries that I recollect having seen in the hands of any private clergyman on the island. He had but lately come to this place, and was busy fitting up his furniture. The rector himself is almost superannuated, though by no means an old man. His name is Sæ-

and *Frey*, for peace and good seasons; after which many drank *Bragafull*, or the toast of the mighty heroes who had fallen in battle. They also drank a bumper in memory of such of their deceased relations as had distinguished themselves by some great action; to this toast they gave the name of *minni*." *Saga Hacconar Goda*, cap. xvi.

On the introduction of Christianity into the north, the names of *Odin*, *Frey*, &c. were laid aside, and the health of *Christ* and the *Saints* was drunk by the new converts—a custom which was long kept up in these parts of Europe. We are told by Snorro, that when King Svein gave a splendid feast to the *Jomsvikinga* chiefs, previous to his accession to the throne, he first of all drank a cup to the memory of his father; after which he proposed the health of Christ, (*Christmini*,) which they all drank; then the health of St Michael, &c. *Saga af Olave Tryggvasyni*, cap. 31.

* This is the mountain which Mr Hooker confounds with the *Helgafell*, near *Hafnafiord*, in the *Gullbringu* Syssel. The same mistake is found in the note to the abstract of the Eyrbyggia Saga, in the Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, p. 478.

mund Holm, the author of the very inaccurate account of the last volcanic eruption. The present church of *Helgafell* owes its erection to his mechanical genius; all the carpenter-work having been accomplished with his own hands. On taking down the old building, he discovered in the altar-piece a *paxspialld*, or thin flat stone, with an Anglo-Saxon inscription upon it; but as no copy was taken of it, the stone was either broken to pieces or lost, so that no farther account can now be obtained of it.

Helgafell was the abode of Snorro Goda, priest of *Thor*, and one of the most powerful chiefs in the west of Iceland. The Eyrbyggia Saga is almost wholly taken up with a detail of his intrigues, his prosecutions, and his cruelties. One of the first churches was built here on the public adoption of the Christian religion; and about the year 1188, the monastery of Flatey was transferred to this place, and became one of the richest in Iceland, possessing no less than ninety-six farms at the time of the Reformation, when it was secularized, and the lands added to the Danish crown, under the designation of Arnarstapa-umbod. *

Stickesholm I found situated on the west side of a narrow sound, by which it is separated from a small island, presenting the same columnar appearances with *Helgafell*. It consists of two merchants' houses, with the warehouses belonging to them, and the dwelling-house of Mr Hialltalin, the surgeon of the district. The principal merchant is Mr Benedictson, a native Icelander, who has distinguished himself from all the other merchants on the island by his literary pursuits, and especially by his attachment to northern antiquities, with which he possesses a very intimate acquaintance. His collection of Icelandic MSS. is considerable. He possesses several copies of the more important sagas, which he is comparing together, and writing out a fair copy of the text, accompanied with the most established readings. His zeal for the transmission of these ancient documents to pos-

* "The lands in Zetland, which formerly belonged to the bishop, and which were transferred to the crown, are also called *umbath* lands." HIBBERT'S *Zetland*, vol. i. p. 164. note. Edin. 1809, 8vo.

terity, has induced him to form the resolution of bequeathing the collection to his eldest son, with the stipulation, that it be bequeathed again by him in the same manner, so as to form the perpetual property of the family.

On entering his shop, I was happy to recognise a number of Bibles and New Testaments advantageously exposed for sale. A quantity of copies had been gratuitously distributed, and received with great thankfulness; and Mr B. expected that the sale at the ensuing summer-market would be considerable, as the greatest want of the Scriptures prevailed in the district. By Mr and Madame Benedictson, as also by Mr and Madame Hialltalin, I was treated in the most polite and hospitable manner. Indeed, the two families seemed to vie with one another which of them should be most unremitting in their attentions.

After having settled my business with Mr Benedictson, I was accompanied by the surgeon to the cottage of *Thingvalla*, for the purpose of surveying one of the principal places of sacrifice on the island. Thorolf had no sooner built the *hof* to Thor, than he instituted a provincial assembly for the administration of justice, and fixed the place of meeting on a small tongue of land which juts out from the peninsula. This spot was also held in such sanctity, that it was forbid to shed blood on it; nor were the people allowed to ease nature within its precincts, but were obliged to repair to a distant rock appointed for the purpose. In a skirmish, however, that took place after the death of Thorolf, about the holy ground, it was defiled with human blood, and pronounced unfit for being any longer the place of a court. The forum was accordingly removed to *Thingvalla*, where a number of important regulations were made for the preservation of public and social order.

It was some time before we could find the place. A little to the south of the cottage we fell in with an immense number of small square heights, which are evidently the ruins of the booths used by the people at the public assembly. We here instituted a strict search after the *Blot-steinn*, or Stone of Sacrifice, on which human victims were immolated

to Thor; but sought in vain in the immediate vicinity of the booths, none of the stones in that quarter answering to the description which had been given of it. At last we descried a large stone in the middle of a morass at some distance, which, though rough and unshapen, was determined to be the identical "Stone of Fear," by the "horrid circle of Brumo," in the centre of which it is situate. The stones which form this circular range appear also to be of a considerable size; but as they are now almost entirely covered by the morass, it is impossible to ascertain their depth except by digging. The circle itself is about twelve yards in diameter, and the stones are situated at short distances from each other. The *Blot-steinn* is of an oblong shape, with a sharp summit, on which the backs of the victims were broken that were offered as expiatory sacrifices, in order to appease the wrath of the offended deity, and purge the community from the obnoxiousness of guilt. Within the circle, called, in Icelandic, *domhringr*,* sat the judges, before whom the accused, with their advocates and witnesses, were convened, while the spectators crowded around the outside of the range in order to hear the trial. The remains of these forensic and sacrificial circles are still found in great abundance throughout Scandinavia; and it is more than probable, that many of the ranges of stones discovered in different parts of Great Britain, especially Scotland, were used for similar purposes, and owe their existence to the Picts, or the intercourse which, in ancient times, was maintained between the northern nations and the coasts of our island.

On the 1st of June I again left *Stickesholm*, and retraced my steps to *Helgafell*, whence I proceeded in nearly a southerly direction to the farm of *Drápuhlíd*, which lies at the base of the mountain of the same name, famous for the number of curious minerals with which it abounds. From this farm the road lay nearly due east, across a number of low barren hills, among the gravel of which I discovered abundance of chalcedony and jasper; quitting which, I descended by the end of *Ulfarsfell* to the shores of the *Ulfarsfiord*,

* *Domhring*, doom's-ring, the ring or circle of judgment.

or Swan Frith, and passed close to the tumulus of Arnkell, the celebrated rival of Snorro Goda. In the Saga, he is exhibited as a model of civil virtues, and in every respect the reverse of the pontiff of *Helgafell*, to whose cruel and intriguing disposition he ultimately fell a victim. It being low water, I saved a ride of more than two miles, by crossing the bay, which was nearly covered with swans; and after skirting the base of the mountains on its eastern side for the space of an hour, I arrived about eight in the evening at the church of *Narfeyri*, where I had my tent pitched just in time to escape a heavy rain, which continued without intermission the whole of the night.

I had scarcely got dressed the following morning, when the farmer made his appearance at the tent-door, and presented me with some excellent eider-duck eggs, my cheerful acceptance of which appeared to give him great satisfaction. He seemed also much pleased on my telling him that he must certainly be a descendant of Geirrid—a matron who lived in the vicinity soon after the occupation of the island, and was possessed of so hospitable a disposition, that she caused her habitation to be erected on the road, so that every traveller was obliged to pass through it, and invited to take some refreshment at a table which she always kept covered on purpose.* Two or three examples of a similar nature are recorded in the Sagas, which prove that the hospitality so highly celebrated in the Hâvamâl,† was not a poetic fiction, but a virtue of high repute, and in common practice among the ancient inhabitants of the north.

From *Narfeyri* I rode in an easterly direction across a low tract which is called *Skogarstrand*, from the excellent wood which abounded here in former times, but of which scarcely a vestige remains at the present day. It was my intention to have proceeded as far as *Snoksdal*, but the badness of the weather compelled me, before I got half way, to take shelter at the church of *Breidabolstad*, where I spent the remainder of the day in a very agreeable manner with the Rev. Mr Hialtalin, formerly of *Saurbær*, of whom Sir

* Eyrbyggia Saga, cap. viii. † Stroph. 2, 3, 4.

George Mackenzie has given so favourable a description in his Travels. He possesses a good turn for sacred poetry, and has written a considerable number of theological works, which are still lying by him in manuscript, there not being any opportunity of publishing them. Of these, the most important is a translation of Bastholm's Jewish History, which would be read with avidity, could it only be put into the hands of the natives. Mr H. is now advancing in years, and with a large family of children combines but a small living; yet he seems uncommonly lively and cheerful in his disposition. At the door of the church, which is extremely small, and in a bad state of repair, I observed a stone of basalt, with an inscription partly Runic and partly Latin; but the letters were so defaced, that it was wholly illegible. It bears the date of 1681.

It was from a small island in the vicinity of this place that Eirik the Red set sail, in the year 983, in quest of a continent to the west of Iceland, of which he had received some obscure notice, and, after a short navigation, he discovered Greenland, where he remained three years, exploring the coasts, and giving names to the different places which he visited. The accounts he gave of it on his return had such an effect on his countrymen, that not fewer than five-and-twenty vessels were fitted out for the new continent, of which, however, only fourteen reached the land, the rest having either been lost at sea, or driven back to Iceland. *

The morning of the 3d prognosticating better weather, I recommenced my journey, but had made but little progress when it again began to rain, which rendered the ride very uncomfortable. The outline of the mountains which stretch in an easterly direction from the Yökul, now disappeared, and gave way to a long extent of rocky country, many parts of which exhibited the remains of ancient lavas; while, on the other hand, the *Breidafiord*, dividing and opening into the *Hvamsfiord* and *Gilsfiord*, and the intervening mountains, presented a very bold and picturesque scenery.

* Landnamabok, Part II [illegible] cap. 24

Having descended to the shores of the *Hvamsfiord*, the road, which had been very stony, greatly improved; and became still better, after I had passed the stone which forms the boundary between the Syssels of *Dala* and *Snafellsness*. At a short distance from the beach, my guide pointed out to me the site of the *Irar-Budar*, or Irish Booths, which were occupied in former times by traders from the north of Ireland. As a mercantile station, this was certainly one of the most central and convenient that could be selected; but the shallowness of the bay is supposed to have been the reason why it was abandoned. Many other places on the coasts of Iceland are still known by the same name, which proves that at one period a considerable trade must have been carried on between the two islands. After having crossed with much difficulty a number of deep pools (Icel. *pollar*) that were filling by the tide, I reached the first houses in *Dala* Syssel, and, proceeding over the end of a projecting mountain, arrived about six o'clock in the evening at *Snoksdal*, the abode of a rich peasant, from whom I obtained permission to pitch my tent on a beautiful green spot between the houses and the church. Though somewhat slow in his movements, he possessed no small share of dignified manners, and was assiduous in his endeavours to administer to my comfort during my stay at his farm. He was the only peasant that I could not, by any means, prevail on to accept of payment for his services.

The 4th of June, being the Lord's day, I had an opportunity of attending worship at this place. The congregation was pretty numerous, and manifested much seriousness and piety in the exercises of devotion. The prayers and discourse too of the chaplain savoured of a deeper sense of religion than any I had yet heard on the island. Instead of a few general petitions, pronounced in a cold and uninteresting manner, he offered up a prayer, in which a full and explicit confession was made of sin; its forgiveness implored, in virtue of the atonement of the Mediator; and a full supply of those blessings supplicated, of which himself and his hearers stood in need. The Psalms were taken from the

old Psalm-book; and while the congregation sung an Icelandic translation of one of the early confessions, I almost fancied myself in some Christian church of the fourth or fifth century; or in one of the Syrian churches in India, so interestingly described by the late Dr Buchanan in his Christian Researches.

CHAP. XII.

Journey through the Syssels of Dala, Bardastrand, and Isafiord — Hvam — Svinadal — Saubœarsveit — Kampur — Domestic Scene — Reykiaholar — Hot Springs — Breidafiord and its Islands — Eider Ducks — Flatey — Hergisley — Effects of Drunkenness — Briâmslæk — Bildudal — Hrafnseyri — Foxes — Thingeyri — Hollt — Return — Superstition — Vatnseyri — Saudlauksdal — Eggert Olafsen — Bardastrand — Sturturbrand — Gilsfiord — Raudsey — Skard — Basaltic Pitlars near Budardal.

In the forenoon of Monday, the 5th of June, I got the farmer of *Snoksdal* to accompany me to *Hiardarhollt*, the residence of the Dean, in our way to which we had to pass two formidable rivers, *Haukadalsâ* and *Laxâ*, both of which had been unfordable for several days, and we found the latter still swelled, and rolling along with great rapidity. At a short distance from *Snoksdal*, we passed to the right of *Kvennabrecka*, the birth-place of the learned antiquary, Arna Magnæus, who was very industrious in collecting the ancient Icelandic MSS. and bequeathed to the University Library of Copenhagen, what of his own private library escaped the flames which consumed his house in the year 1728. It is from these MSS. that the critical edition of the Edda, and editions of the more important Sagas are publishing by a committee of learned gentlemen in Copenhagen, acting as trustees of the legacy.

I had now to cross several of the long dales which give the name to the Syssel, most of which produce excellent pasturage; and the low hills by which they are separated from each other are overgrown for the most part with coarse

grass, heath, or stunted birch. It was pleasing to see the flocks of sheep and lambs that were scattered about in every direction; though, at the same time, the agreeable sensation was in some measure diminished by the reflection that numbers of the lambs were dying from the intensity of the cold. I was informed, that, at an average, the mortality this season amounted to nine or ten on every farm: a loss of a very serious nature to an Icelandic peasant.

The Dean I found to be an aged man of seventy-seven. He expressed great satisfaction at the new supply of Bibles that had been provided for his countrymen. His investigation had just been completed, from which it appeared that the greatest want of the inspired volume existed in the Dales. Having given him an order on Mr Benedictson of *Stickesholm* for the requisite number of copies, and partaken of some refreshment, I pursued my journey across the hills and dales that stretch forward and terminate in the eastern shore of the *Hvamsfiord;* which bay I skirted for some time, till reaching its termination, I struck off to the church of *Hvam*, from which it takes its name, where I arrived about six in the evening.

Hvam is most agreeably situated on the east side of a short, but beautiful and fertile valley, surrounded on every side, excepting the south, by high precipitous mountains, some of which furnish specimens of long four-sided needles of obsidian, surturbrand, and various minerals of volcanic formation. It was first taken possession of by Audur the Rich, widow of a noted pirate king called Oleif the White, who, after having made the conquest of Dublin, was proclaimed King of that part of Ireland; but his kingdom was of short duration, as he soon afterwards fell in battle. His queen was obliged to make her escape into Scotland; but not deeming herself safe in that country, she caused a vessel to be built privately in one of the forests of Caithness, and proceeded by way of the Orkney and Faroe Islands to Iceland, with twenty free men in her train. Establishing herself at this place, she soon rendered herself conspicuous by her profession of the Christian religion, and chose, as the

place of her devotions, a bold and precipitous rock in the front of the mountain, where, at a distance from the bustle of human affairs, and commanding a majestic view of the works of God, she caused a cross to be erected, and adored that Redeemer into whose name she had been baptised. From this circumstance, the rock obtained the name of *Krossholum*, which it still retains. On the re-establishment of idolatry in these parts after her death, a place of heathen worship was erected upon the rock,* and it was held in such repute that the superstitious multitude regarded it as the gate of the invisible world.†

Hvam is also famous as the birth-place of Snorro Sturluson, the celebrated northern historian. It was long occupied by a succession of mighty chiefs, the relics of whose authority are still visible in an octagonal mound, called the *Lögretta*, where they were accustomed to administer justice among their dependants.

The incumbent, Sira Jon Gislason, received me in the kindest manner; and I soon recognised in him a deep sense of religion, and a spirit and manners truly apostolic. We spent the remainder of the evening in religious conversation, in which he took the most lively interest. Indeed, I anticipated this immediately on entering his room, as the Bible he had just been reading was still lying on the table.

As it was necessary for me to have an interview with the Sysselman, I purposed to travel the following day along the base of the mountains on the north side of the bay; but learning from my host that he was absent, I resolved to visit him on my return, and directed my course into a wild mountainous region through the valley of *Svinadal*, a little to the east of *Hvam*. The mountains on either side are of an ordinary height, but very irregularly formed, and pre-

* The ancient Scandinavians had two different kinds of places appropriated to the worship of their idols; the one open and unroofed, with a huge stone in the middle, to which they gave the name of *Horg*: the other, properly a temple, and designated by the appellation of *Hof*. It was the former that was raised on *Krossholum*.

† Landnâm. Part II. caps. x., and xvi.

sented evident marks of the successive revolutions to which they had been subjected. Large masses of lava, that had fallen down from their original beds, lay scattered about on both sides of the valley; and, at one plac, I fell in with several fragments of surturbrand, but the ravine through which they had been washed, being still full of snow, it was impossible to discover its site.

That the heat which once raged in this tract is not yet altogether extinguished, is plainly discoverable from the hot springs in the mouth of the valley; and the white incrustations that present themselves in various places, prove the existence of numerous springs in former times. We had here to cross a river repeatedly by means of snow bridges, many of which were of no great thickness. The quantity of snow we encountered in our descent was immense. It never melts, but accumulates from year to year; and there is every reason to suppose that it will ultimately become a Yökul.

Leaving this cold and cheerless tract, we entered a valley that strikes off from its termination in a westerly direction; at first narrow, rocky, and sterile, but gradually opening into an extensive marshy plain, the farms of which collectively assume the name of *Saurbæar-sveit*. From the isthmus to the north of this plain, a central chain of mountains extend through the whole of the north-west peninsula, and shooting forward collateral branches from its sides, it receives a number of large bays from the circumjacent ocean. The road lies across these mountains; but though the season was considerably advanced, the quantity of snow that filled their gulleys rendered them absolutely impenetrable, so that I was obliged to abandon the idea of reaching the most distant Syssels by that route. By the advice of my kind friend, who had accompanied me from *Hrum*, I left my horses and the greater part of my baggage at the farm of *Hval*, the peasant to whom it belongs engaging to proceed with me as far as *Reykiar ness*, from which place I was to make the tour of the islands in the *Breidafiord*.

About eleven o'clock at night I set off with my conductor,

a middle-aged man, of a good natural understanding, and clear and serious views of divine truth, in order to reach a difficult pass at the base of the mountains before the return of the tide in the *Gilsfiord*. This bay runs far up into the peninsula, but is of no great breadth. It is bounded by precipitous mountains on either side, from which numerous disruptions are incessantly taking place, so that the road is neither safe nor easy. At two o'clock we gained the end of the bay, where we found two small solitary cottages, one of which belongs to *Dala*, and the other to *Bardastrand* Syssel. Here winter still maintained his benumbing sway. The most of the ground was covered with snow, and only a few patches of vegetation appeared in the immediate vicinity of the houses. The mercury stood two degrees below the freezing point.

Passing the church of *Garpsdal*, we pursued our course to the eastern shore of *Kroksfiord*, which was strewed with beautiful chalcedonies, zeolites, and green jaspers; and at a short distance in the bay, rose several small islands, whose sides displayed superb basaltine appearances. We next crossed a tract of white schistiform stones, which seemed to owe their formation to the depositions of hot springs; and arrived about six in the morning at the small farm of *Kampur*, where I resolved to enjoy a few hours sleep.

Having left my tent and bedding at *Hvol*, I was now under the necessity of choosing an Icelandic bed, which, I must confess, I did not like, on more accounts than one; but as my fatigue was excessive, I was the more easily reconciled to my situation. I was shewn into an out-house, while the mistress of the farm made up a bed for me in the sleeping apartment, to which I soon repaired, through a dark passage, from which a few steps led me into my chamber. The most of the family being still in bed, raised themselves nearly erect, naked as they were, to behold the early and strange visitor. Though almost suffocated for want of air, I should soon have fallen asleep, had it not been for an universal scratching that took place in all the beds in the room, which greatly excited my fears, notwithstanding the new

and cleanly appearance of the wadmel on which I lay. At one period of the operation, the noise was, seriously speaking, paramount to that made by a groom in combing down his horses. Ultimately, however, every disagreeable emotion was stilled by the balmy power of sleep, and I enjoyed, for five hours, the soundest repose I ever had in my life.

Both the peasant and his wife were uncommonly frank and loquacious. They had numerous questions to put to me about England, and the situation of our farmers, which it required no small ingenuity to answer consistently with truth, and yet so as not to make my entertainers feel the vast inferiority of their own circumstances. I generally availed myself of the introduction of this topic, which often happened during my peregrinations in Iceland, to remark, that to creatures of a day, any difference of external condition is but of small moment; and that the grand point is to enjoy an interest in the Divine favour, and an assured hope, founded on a sense of that interest, that when this short and uncertain life terminates, we shall receive an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. Such observations were always well received, and seldom failed to elicit corresponding sentiments. I could not but notice the manner in which my hostess spake of her children. On my inquiring how many she had, her reply was, "I have four. Two of them are here with us, and the other two are with God. It is best with those that are with him; and my chief concern about the two that remain is, that they may reach heaven in safety." Being the first foreigner the family had ever seen, they were much struck with my appearance, and put me down for a *Höfdingi*, or chief; though, in my native country, I should rather, from the appearance of my dress, have passed for a pedlar. They had no copy of the Bible, but rejoiced in the prospect of soon obtaining one.

From *Kampur* the road led us round the two bays, *Kroksfiord* and *Berufiord*, leaving the latter of which, we had to ascend a very rocky and uneven tract on the east side of the *Reykianess* mountains, which has evidently been subject

to volcanic agency, though, from the smooth and rounded appearance of many of the stones, I could not but conclude that it has subsequently been covered with water. About five o'clock in the afternoon, I came to the farm of *Reykiaholar*, where I was kindly received by Madame Thoroddson, who could not sufficiently express her regret at the absence of her husband, as he might have enjoyed the benefit of my company, and rendered my stay more agreeable than, she was afraid, would now be the case. My principal object in visiting this promontory was to form the acquaintance of Sira Paul Hialmarson, to whom I had a letter of introduction from the Bishop. This clergyman was formerly Rector of the *Holum* school, and is considered to be one of the best scholars, and most consistent official characters on the island. I was sorry to learn that he was from home, and was not expected to return for some days; however, a letter, which I have since received from him, not only corroborates the above account of his character, but expresses, in unequivocal terms, the warm interest he takes in the cause of religion, and his cordial approbation of the steps that had been taken to supply his countrymen with the words of eternal life.

In point of situation, I much doubt whether *Reykiaholar* have its equal in Iceland. It stands on a rising ground, at the distance of half a mile from the boldly projecting mountains of *Reykianess*, and about the same distance from the ness itself. Directly in front is the spacious *Breidafiord*, with its numerous and strikingly picturesque islands; to the left is the *Gilsfiord*, beyond which a prodigious break in the mountains of Dala Syssel, called *Skards-Klofning*, presents itself to the view; while, towards the west, a number of grand promontories, stretching forward from the main body of the peninsula, recede in beautiful perspective, until they are lost in the distance. What greatly adds to the beauty of the prospect is the numerous columns of steam which are unremittingly ascending from the hot springs scattered around the farm. Many of these springs boil with great violence. The largest is called *Krabla-da*, and has former-

ly been remarkable on account of its eruptions; but the bason has been so completely filled up with stones, that it cannot now throw its water to a greater height than three or four feet. Like most of the spouting fountains, it ejects for the space of five minutes, and intermits for nearly the same space of time, yet boiling violently during the interval. The grass lands about the farm are very extensive, but differ much in quality; the lower part being greatly disfigured with knolls, and blown up by the wind.

Owing to stormy weather, I was under the necessity of remaining at *Reykiaholar* till the morning of the 9th, when, with much difficulty, I procured four men and two women to row me over to the island of *Flatey*, about twenty miles distant from the promontory of *Reykianess*. As the weather was fine, I had a most agreeable passage among the innumerable small islands that cover this part of the bay, most of which appear to have been thrown up by submarine volcanoes, and many of them rest on superb perpendicular pillars of basaltic rock. The theory of the volcanic origin of these islands is corroborated by the numerous hot springs which exist not only on many of the holms themselves, but also in the sea around them. At the fishing station, *Oddbiarnar-sker*, there is a hot-spring considerably within high-water mark, and another nearer the holm, which is so hot that eggs may be boiled in it. These springs are of great use to the fishermen, as they supply them with plenty of fresh water, which is otherwise not to be found in the neighbourhood. Near *Sandey* is another curious spring in the middle of a rock, which is visible at low water, boiling with violence, and splashing its contents around the bason. It possesses the power of incrustation, and the margin is entirely covered with a white crust. *

Most of the islands are covered with grass, which is made into hay at the proper season by the inhabitants; but they are chiefly valuable on account of the immense flocks of sea-fowl by which they are frequented. As I passed through between them, my ears were stunned with the cries of the

* Olafsen og Povelsen, pp. 367, 388.

sea-parrots and crees, the latter of which abounded in such numbers, that they completely covered the surface of the water, and on rising, almost darkened the atmosphere.

When about half way to *Flatey*, we landed on a small holm, in order to give the people some respite, when I had an opportunity of witnessing the surprising tameness of the eider-ducks, whose nests lay scattered in great profusion about my feet. On approaching them, the drake always took the alarm, and plunged with great precipitancy into the water; but the duck generally kept sitting on her nest, or merely flew to the distance of a yard or two, and on my attempting to touch the eggs, returned in a rage, and, with very significant signs, gave me to understand, that nature had invested her with an undisputed right to the property. Many of them suffered me to stroke them, and could only be thrust with violence from the nest. In some parts of Iceland, especially at *Videy*, the eider-ducks build their nests on the roofs of the houses, and become quite familiar with the inhabitants. The nests are constructed of sea weeds, and lined with the finest down, plucked from the breast of the fowls. As soon as the natives observe that the first eggs are laid, they remove them, robbing the nest at the same time of the down; and this cruel experiment they repeat a second or third time; but it is generally found, that if they are robbed more than twice, they begin to desert the place, and if pillaged oftener, they quit it entirely.

A few days after the young ducks leave the egg, they proceed to the water, under the guidance of their dam, who swims with them on her back to some distance, when, making a sudden dive, she abandons them to themselves, and, reappearing, tempts them to swim towards her, so that on the first trial they commonly become expert swimmers. When the breeding season is over, they generally stand out to sea; yet numbers are seen the whole winter frequenting the creeks and bays about the coast. The eggs furnish excellent food to the inhabitants, and the down sells high to the merchants, by whom it is sent to different parts of the continent, where it is used for beds.

The sea-parrots dig holes in the sand, like rabbits, and build their nests at the depth of two or three yards below the surface of the ground. They are caught by means of a hook fastened to the end of a stick; and, what is singular, when one is dragged out, his companions take hold of him, and endeavour to retain him, by which means they are often caught to the number of three or four at a time.

About six o'clock in the evening, I landed on the island of *Flatey*, famous for the valuable book of annals, called the *Codex Flateyensis*, which was presented by Jon Torfason, one of the inhabitants of the place, to Bishop Svenson, by whom it was sent to *Copenhagen*, where it still exists in the royal library. The island is only about a mile in circumference; yet it is better inhabited than many of the contiguous islands, and has a good church, and a mercantile establishment of some importance. The clergyman, Sira Thomas, is obliged to follow the original employment of Zebedee's children, and is particularly dexterous in catching seals. His official duties are perhaps the most perilous, as well as the most laborious of any in the Icelandic church: as he has two parishes, one of which comprehends the islanders, and the other lies on the mainland, at the distance of ten or twelve miles from *Flatey*. Scarcely a winter passes in which his life is not in danger, owing to the difficulties connected with the passage of the different sounds on the ice. Yet for all this service, he is only rewarded with a miserable pittance, and is obliged to devote the most of his time to the fishing, in order to provide for the maintenance of his family.

The copies of the Scriptures that have been forwarded to this harbour had all been disposed of, owing to the zeal and activity of the Sysselman, who had taken them along with him for distribution at the different courts which he had held during the summer circuit. As the farmers must all attend these courts, a more convenient and expeditious mode of circulation could not have been adopted."

Having rested about three hours on *Flatey*, I again embarked for the mainland in the boat of the clergyman of *Briámslæk*, who is obliged to act the part of ferryman be-

tween the two places. The evening was clear and serene, and it was long before the sun withdrew behind the high mountains of *Bardastyrand*. About three o'clock in the morning we arrived at *Hergilsey*, a beautiful basaltic island, covered with rich grass, and inhabited by several peasants. We put in here for the purpose of resting the women that had plied at the oar, and proceeded to one of the houses, where the clergyman assured me of a welcome reception, although the whole family were now immersed in sleep. His prediction was soon accomplished; one of the women having wakened the landlady, who instantly provided us with plenty of eider-duck eggs and coffee. Of this latter article rather too liberal a use is made in the west of Iceland; for instead of ordinary cups, the inhabitants use large basons, which not only occasions a great waste of coffee and sugar, but proves very prejudicial to the health, as such quantities cannot but relax and enervate the system. This island is frequented by the eider-duck in such numbers, that I had great difficulty, in walking about on the heights, to avoid trampling on their nests. The columns of basalt are most stately on the north side; and, being irregularly broken, they present to the eye of the imagination some of the most striking resemblances of oriental ruins that can possibly be conceived.

One of the passengers having drunk too much spirituous liquor at the factory, we had been under the necessity of leaving him in the boat to the care of his servant, who was perfectly sober; but, what was our surprise, when we returned from the farm, to find that during our absence the servant had availed himself of his master's indisposition, and applied very freely to a brandy jar that had been left in the boat, the consequence of which was, that on attempting to leave it, he had plunged into the sea, and his master being incapable of rendering him any assistance, he must instantly have been drowned, had we not arrived the moment we did. Having got him up again into the boat, the Icelanders were determined to set off with him, but on my assuring them he would die of cold, they agreed to leave him on the island,

and carried him on a barrow to the farm. Hospitality was now succeeded by compassion; the patient had his wet clothes taken off, and was put into a warm bed, and every thing was done that could contribute to his restoration; but the shock he had received was too severe for his weak habit of body, and he expired in less than two days. What a confirmation, even in a temporal point of view, of that Scripture, which saith, "The wages of sin is death!" He had travelled over the most of the continent of Europe, made a voyage or two to the East Indies, and weathered the storms of more than fourscore years; and now at last, on his native shores, he dies like a fool "for want of wisdom."

Drinking is certainly a vice, by no means common among the natives of Iceland. Neither their means nor their opportunities admit of their indulging in it to the same extent with the inhabitants of other countries; yet it cannot be denied, that the factories sometimes present scenes of drunkenness, when the peasants repair thither for the purposes of trade; though even then it is not so much the quantity of liquor they drink, as their being unaccustomed to the use of it, that occasions this temporary derangement.

From *Hergilsey* we had a pleasant row of about five hours to *Briámslæk*, on the opposite coast of *Bardastrand*, where I was hospitably entertained at the clergyman's, and had the pleasure of meeting my friends the Messrs Hialtalins, on their return from a visit to *Bildudal*. My route now lay west along the coast, many parts of which display immense walls of basaltic configuration, running like artificial divisions to the length of several miles. The mountains exhibit some very extensive strata of the same kind of rock, with different other beds, all laid with the most perfect regularity.

About noon I stopped at the farm of *Hammar*, where the aged and respectable Sysselman, Mr Scheving, lives, with whom I had some interesting conversation; and after coffee I pursued my journey up the desolate *Morárdal*, from which I commenced the ascent of *Ho heidi*, a very high and acclivitous mountain-road, so called from the cataracts and cascades that abound on both sides of the mountain. Those

on the north side are peculiarly beautiful; the river *Forsá* having forced its way through beds of columnar rock, numerous turrets and spires present themselves amidst the clouds of mist arising from the water-falls. Directly above us, as we ascended,

> ——————— " the mountain's head
> Stupendous rose; crags, bare and bleachen, spread
> In wild confusion—fearful to the eye—
> In barren greatness, while the vallies lie
> Crouching beneath, in their brown vesture clad,
> And silent all." *

The passage of the mountain was attended with considerable difficulty, from its steepness on both sides, and the prodigious wreaths of snow over which I had to ride, and which in many places were so extremely soft that I was obliged to walk, as they could scarcely support the horses.

Descending to the termination of the *Forsfiord*, which is only a branch or arm of the extensive *Arnarfiord*, I skirted its western shore along the base of a beetling and precipitous mountain-range, till I reached the latter bay, when the road winded round some bold promontories, and about seven in the evening I arrived at the mercantile station of *Bildudal*, which consists of the most respectable looking houses I recollect having seen on the island. They were built by the late Mr Thorlacius, and are executed in a manner highly honourable to his taste, and the enterprising spirit with which he was animated. I here met with the kindest reception from his widow, whom I found still much cast down, after her late severe bereavement, and was much pressed to stay till Monday; but having previously been informed of the difficulty which often attends the passage of the *Arnarfiord*, I resolved to avail myself of the continuance of calm weather, and proceeded the same evening across the bay. The boat was exceedingly leaky, so that, while the men rowed, I was obliged every now and then to bale the water out of it; and as the bay was at least nine miles in breadth, we should have

* Cottle's Messiah.

been exposed to great danger had we been overtaken by a sudden squall of wind.

On leaving *Bildudal*, I had quitted a house distinguished for hospitality, in which I might have expected every thing that could in any way contribute to my comfort and refreshment; and now entering the Syssel of *Isafiord*, the most northerly on the island, I landed at a place entirely unknown to me, and where it was very problematical what kind of reception I should meet with. However, my favourable prepossession of the hospitable disposition of the Icelanders in general encouraged me to proceed. At eleven o'clock I arrived at the church and parsonage of *Hrafnseyri*, where I was agreeably surprised to find the following Latin inscription above the door of the dwelling-house:

"INTRANTIBUS SIT HAS DOMUS PAX
ET QUIES, AT EXEUNTIBUS SALUS."

The flow of good spirits, however, which this animating inscription excited was in a great measure damped by the distressed state of the family; the clergyman having been nearly killed by a disruption from a neighbouring mountain having overtaken him while climbing in search of a fox's den, and, carrying him along with it, he was left half buried in the midst of the debris. Had not one of his servants accidentally discovered the spot where he lay, he must have perished in this condition. His head and face were much fractured, and his limbs sadly mangled; however, by the great attention of his family, together with the best mode of cure they could adopt, he was again in a fair way of recovery.

The foxes are very numerous in Iceland, and commit great depredations among the sheep. They are of two kinds; the one white, and the other of a variegated brown colour. They attack the strongest wethers, and when they cannot kill them instantly, they take them by the wool, and suffer themselves to be dragged till the sheep get tired, when they seize them by the throat, and drink their blood. It is no uncommon thing for a peasant to lose twenty or thirty sheep

in this way in the course of the year. They are besieged in their dens, shot, and caught in traps; yet it is found impossible wholly to exterminate them. When the fox happens to be caught by the foot in a gin, he gnaws off his leg without scruple, and then limps away to his den. That he possesses his proverbial cunning also on this island is obvious, from what is related by the inhabitants. On discovering a flock of sea-gulls sitting about the shore, he approaches them backwards, with his tail raised so as to resemble one of themselves; and as it is commonly white, and he advances with slow steps, they seldom discover the intrigue until he has reached them, when he is sure to seize one of them for his prey. In the winter he scrapes up the snow to the windward, and blinds them, so that they are completely taken at unawares.

Though I cannot vouch for the truth of the following story, yet as it obtains general belief in Iceland, I cannot avoid inserting it in this place. In the vicinity of the North Cape, where the precipices are almost entirely covered with various species of sea-fowl, the foxes proceed on their predatory expeditions in company, and previous to the commencement of their operations, they hold a kind of mock-fight upon the rocks, in order to determine their relative strength. When this has been fairly ascertained, they advance to the brink of the precipice, and taking each other by the tail, the weakest descends first, while the strongest, forming the last in the row, suspends the whole number till the foremost has reached their prey. A signal is then given, on which the uppermost fox pulls with all his might, and the rest assist him as well as they can with their feet against the rocks. In this way they proceed from rock to rock, until they have provided themselves with a sufficient supply.

June 11. My having crossed the *Arnarfiord* last night was most fortunate, as a violent storm commenced early this morning, and lasted several days. There was no service at this place, owing to the indisposition of the clergyman; but as I was informed there would be sermon at *Sand*, a church on the north side of the *Arnarfiskar* mountains, I resolved to

Engraved by R. Scott Edin.

proceed to that place, and was accompanied by a young man, whose conversation proved in the highest degree interesting and agreeable. He had never been at any school, yet he had read the whole of the Greek Testament, several books of the Iliad, and a number of the Latin classics. We had also a robust female in our train, to assist us in case any of the horses should sink in the snow. The *heidi* was short, but exceedingly steep, and being almost entirely covered with snow, in which were large and deep rents, we had considerable difficulty in crossing it.

On our arrival at the first house in the parish of *Sand*, we were informed that there was no worship at the church; and as I found the clergyman's house much out of my way, I pursued my course to the southern shore of the *Dyrafiord*. It gave me pleasure, however, to be informed that the minister, though blind with age, is not destitute of spiritual sight, but a lover of divine truth, and a serious and exemplary character.

Crossing the east end of *Sandfell*, a small insulated mountain, abounding with zeolite, chalcedony, and jasper, I arrived about noon, at the mercantile establishment of *Thingeyri*, which is very agreeably situated on the east side of a low point of land that juts out into the bay, and defends the harbour against the western surge. The bay is so narrow at this place that a person may call across it; yet it runs up to such a distance among the mountains, that it would require a whole day to ride round it. The houses belonging to the factory are in good condition; and a fine green park immediately behind them, adds greatly to the beauty of the place, and is finely contrasted with the gloom of the adjacent mountains. I was here invited to take up my lodgings with Mr Steenbach, a native of Norway, and factor for Mr Henkel of Copenhagen, from whom I met with every possible attention, and in whose house I found a large collection of choice books, the greater part of which were on subjects of natural history.

The following morning I crossed the *Dyrafiord*, and landing at the farm of *Gimlafell*, I obtained a guide to conduct

me over the mountains to the next bay. The *heidi* or mountain road was the easiest of any I had passed in Iceland, and introduced me in the course of three hours into the extensive and beautiful plains of *Onundarfiord*, consisting in some places of a fine alluvial soil, but abounding chiefly in marshes, which produce an uncommon quantity of hay. The mountains on either side of the bay present one of the most romantic and irregular scenes imaginable. They are every now and then transversed by deep vallies, which give the most of them an insulated and pyramidal form; and their strata, forty or fifty in number, are piled one above another in the most perfect order. Similar geologic appearances pervade the whole of the north-western peninsula, though not in the same grand and interesting style as in the neighbourhood of this bay. The name of *Vestfiordar*, or the Western Friths, is very appropriately given to this part of the island, for it consists entirely of bays, separated from each other by ridges of bold projecting mountains, and resembles nothing more exactly than the shape of the human hand.*

After passing some dangerous morasses, I arrived at the parsonage of *Hollt*, reckoned one of the best livings in the west of Iceland, where I met with the most [illegible] and cordial reception from Sira Thorvalor Bodvarson, and was immediately introduced into his study, which I found well stocked with books in different departments of science. On the table lay the Vicar of Wakefield, together with a Danish and English Lexicon; a proof that my host was pursuing the study of the English language. He is a learned man, and a good poet, but excels in sacred poetry; many beautiful specimens of which are in the hands of his countrymen. He has translated a number of Gellert's poems, and several

* In conversation one day with a Dutch Captain, who had long frequented the western friths, he presented me in a moment with a chart of them, by laying his hand flat on the table, and traced the navigation from the *Faxafiord* round his thumb into the *Breidafiord*, then past his foremost finger into *Tálkna-fiord*, &c. till he had got round the principal bays.

of Pope's. The Messiah, in particular, is well executed, an autographical copy of which I have in my possession.

My object in penetrating into the Syssel of *Isafiord* was to pay a visit to the Dean, and make the necessary arrangements with him for the distribution of the Scriptures; but on my arrival at *Hollt*, I was disappointed to find, that, owing to the immense quantity of snow with which the mountains to the north of the *Önundarfiord* were covered, it was absolutely impossible to cross them, though now about the middle of June. The only means, therefore, in my power of making provision for supplying the inhabitants of these distant regions, was to settle the business with the Sysselman who lives at *Hiardarhollt*, at a short distance to the west of *Hollt*. I accordingly rode on to that place in the afternoon, accompanied by Sira Thorvaldr, and was happy to find the Sysselman, Mr Ebenezer Thorsteinson, enter cordially into the plan, and willing to do his utmost to promote its execution. We were hospitably entertained at his house, and returned in the evening to *Hollt*.

The inhabitants of this part of Iceland being almost entirely excluded from intercourse with foreigners, retain perhaps more of the original Scandinavian customs than those of the other parts. They are not only more tenacious of the traditions which have been delivered to them by their ancestors, but they apply themselves with greater diligence to the transcription of the written or printed sagas, the greater part of which many of them have learned by heart, and they are almost all capable of expatiating on the excellence or turpitude of the leading actions in the story. What particularly struck me, was the long patriarchal beard which distingaishes the *Önundarfirdingar*; and I am certain that if I had fallen in with them in any part of the continent of Europe, and it had not been for the fairness of their hair, I should have taken them for Polish Jews.

Close behind *Hiardardal* I was surprised to find a pretty extensive tract of lava, as it has been asserted that no such substance existed in the vicinity of the western friths. It appears to be very ancient; exhibits both the porous and

more compact lavas; is for the most part overgrown with moss or grass; and has visibly descended from a cavity in the mountain by which the west side of the dale is defended. I was told by the Sysselman, that an extensive layer of *surturbrand* had lately been discovered in the same mountain, but, being extremely difficult of access, he was afraid it would not be possible to turn it to any account.

On the 13th of June I again left the parsonage of *Hollt*, where I had experienced every possible attention, and commenced my return towards the south. Sira Thorvaldr and the Sysselman had the kindness to accompany me to *Thingeyri*, where I drank a cup of coffee with Mr Steenbach, and then proceeded with a guide to *Brecka*, the abode of the constable, from whom I obtained horses across the mountains. While waiting for the horses, I engaged in a very interesting religious conversation with the female part of the family, (the males being all out at the fishing,) among whom I was happy to find two or three who seemed to have just ideas of evangelical truth, and a deep and lively concern about eternal things.

The mountain-road I found much more dangerous than on my passage north, especially a steep precipice on the south side of the mountain, below which is a profound chasm, called *Mann-ta-pa-gil*, where, as the name indicates, numbers have lost their lives. Here I myself had a very narrow escape; for as we crossed a sloping bed of ice, directly above the chasm, my horse fell with me, yet endeavoured to save himself by allowing the hinder part of his body to swing downwards, and sprawling with his fore feet in order to stop his progress. After sliding down with me to the distance of five or six yards, and only a few moments appeared to separate me from eternity, I providentially succeeded in extricating my feet from the stirrups, and, making a sudden leap, reached a part of the ice, partially covered with snow, where I was enabled to retain my hold. The poor horse, after sliding a few yards further, also stopped, but being unable to raise himself, he kept a firm hold of the ice with his forefeet, trembling violently at the danger to

which, by a natural instinct, he knew he was exposed. In this situation he remained till the guide and I got some ropes tied round his head, when, sensible of our aid, he immediately rose, and by a few daring leaps ultimately reached the snow.

We now proceeded on our descent, which was still attended with danger, owing to the great tenuity of the snow-bridges over which we had to ride, and which concealed from our view the large cataracts we could distinctly hear roaring below us. About midnight we reached the parsonage of *Hrafnseyri*, where I met with the same kind treatment I had experienced on my way north.

On putting into the bay the following morning, I could not but remark that the people turned the boat the contrary way to what I expected they would have done, from the position in which she lay; when I was informed that the Icelanders universally turn the boat with the sun,—a custom which, my informer observed, had most probably its origin in superstition. That he was in the right I was afterwards more fully convinced on discovering, when I witnessed, on one occasion, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, that when the communicants rose from the railing of the altar where they had knelt, such of them as were stationed on the left side of the altar, wheeled round to the right, whereas it would have been more natural for them to have turned about to the left. This incident would, in all probability, have escaped my notice, had it not been for some young people who were not initiated into this mechanical movement, and were about to leave the altar in the natural way, when they were ordered back again, and taught how to perform the evolution. In like manner, when a funeral procession leaves the church, it must always go round the north side, even supposing the grave to be on the south side of the burying-ground. *

* About a hundred years ago the same superstitious custom of making a turn sun-ways was in common practice among the inhabitants of the western islands of Scotland. "The natives of Colonsay are accustomed, at their arrival in Oronsay Isle, to *make a four stations* about the church before they enter upon

In the course of two hours I again found myself on the south side of the *Arnarfiord;* and after partaking of an excellent breakfast, provided me by Mrs Thorlacius, I left *Bildudal*, and proceeded across a number of desolate mountains, for the most part covered with snow, so that at times the guide and I had to lead our horses for miles together. Such places as were free from the snow exhibited nothing but lavas of different ages and forms, the greatest quantity of which appeared to have its source in the irregular cone of *Grarnafell*, situate about the centre of the mountain-ridge which divides the *Arnar* from the *Tálknafiord*. That the subterraneous fire in this ridge is not yet extinguished, though its eruptions must have taken place many ages antecedent to the original discovery of Iceland, is clear from the hot springs that still exist on the northern shore of the last mentioned bay. The volumes of steam rising from these springs afforded a fine contrast to the bleakness and gloom of the surrounding mountains.

Having descended to the termination of the *Tálknafiord*, where I fell in with a few poor-looking hamlets, I had to ascend a very steep and precipitous mountain on the opposite side, and again got involved in a desolate tract, which continued till I reached the bay of *St Patrick*, about six

any kind of business."—"Some of the poorer sort of people in these islands retain the custom of performing these rounds *sun-ways*, about the persons of their benefactors three times, when they bless them, and wish good success to all their enterprizes. Some are very careful, *when they set out to sea, that the boat be first rowed about sun-ways;* and if this be neglected, they are afraid their voyage may prove unfortunate." See MARTIN'S *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, pp. 248, 113. See also pp. 7, 16, 20, 110, 140, 242, 277. Dr Edmonstone informs us, that the Zetland fishermen, to this day, deem it unsafe to turn their boat but with the sun, vol. ii. p. 73. Similar superstitious ideas obtain in the north of Europe, and may be traced to the ancient Grecian superstition, according to which the left-hand side was accounted unlucky, and of evil omen. It is also worthy of notice, that the Jews gave to the evil spirit, or angel of death, the name of *Sammaël*, which is of like import with the Hebrew word denoting the left hand. In the Bible itself we find an important distinction made between the right hand and the left; and the Preacher says expressly, that "a wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart at his left." *Eccle.* x. 2.

o'clock in the evening. This bay is defended on both sides by high and precipitous mountains: those on the south side present a number of bold promontories, jutting forward, but diminishing in size as they recede, till at last they are lost in the Atlantic.

After riding a short way along the beach in a westerly direction, I arrived at the establishment of *Vatneyri*, situated on the east side of a small tongue of low land which here projects into the bay, and affords a safe and excellent harbour. The trade carried on here is considerable, and is in the hands of Mr Clausen, whose factor shewed me every attention in his power. *Vatneyri* is also the residence of the Sysselman, Mr Gudbrand Jonson, whom I was disappointed not to find at home; but it gave me pleasure to be informed by the factor, that more than half the number of the copies of the Scriptures sent to this harbour had already been brought into circulation, and that most of the remaining copies were bespoken.

As I found it was possible to reach the Dean's the same evening, I determined to continue my journey, and was rowed across the *Patrixfiord* by the factor and one of his men. Owing to a heavy swell from the ocean, we found great difficulty in landing, and were obliged to await the alternation of the waves, which took place in the following order: First, three heavy surges, threatening to swallow all before them, broke with a tremendous dash upon the rocks; these were followed by six smaller ones, which just afforded us time to land; after which the three large waves again broke, and so on in regular succession. It now began to rain, and as no horse was to be had in the vicinity, I was under the necessity of walking to *Saudlauksdal*, which proved very fatiguing, on account of the fine yellow sand that covers the entrance of the valley, in which at times I sank to the knees. On my arrival at the parsonage, I was kindly received by the Dean, Sira Jon Ormson, and his family; and after drinking coffee, retired to rest about two o'clock in the morning.

This dale is celebrated for its richness in botanical pro-

ductions, and affords excellent pasture to a numerous flock of sheep. The *tún* is also very productive, and a lake in the middle of the dale abounds in trout. What rendered *Saudlauksdal*, however, peculiarly interesting to me, was its having been the abode of the learned Icelander, Eggert Olafsen, who, at an early period of life, turned his attention to the natural history of his native island; and after finishing his academical studies at the University of Copenhagen, repeatedly made the tour of the island, both alone, and in company with Biarne Paulsen, his countryman and fellow-student. The result of their mutual researches and observations was published at Copenhagen, 1772, in two volumes 4to, under the superintendence of Mr Olafsen. On his return to Iceland, he received the appointment of lawyer, and took up his residence at this place. From his biography, it would appear that the most of his time had been devoted to the study of natural philosophy; but, about four years before his death, he received strong convictions of the insufficiency of the appearances of nature, to satisfy the human mind respecting its dearest and most important concerns; and addicted himself to the study of revealed religion, especially the New Testament, in the reading of which he took great delight. In a poem, written by him about this time, (for he was one of the best poets Iceland has produced these two last centuries,) he strikingly depicts his feelings on this subject; laments his having been duped by the illusions of science; praises the Father of Lights, for the revelation of his will contained in the Scriptures of truth; and avows his determination to spend the remainder of his days in the service and fear of God. This excellent man lost his life in the year 1767, when crossing the *Breidafiord* in an overloaded boat, on which occasion his wife also, and all who were in the boat, perished. *

The Sysselman having arrived during the night, I spent the most of the 15th in conversation with him and the Dean about the distribution of the Icelandic Scriptures, and other subjects of mutual interest. About five in the afternoon, I

* Æfe Eggerts Olafssonar. Hrappsey. 1784, 8vo.

set off from *Saudlauksdal*, accompanied by the son of the Dean, and pursued my course along the southern shore of the *Patrixfiord*, where, now and then, large insulated masses of ancient lava presented themselves to view. Near the end of the bay, we had to skirt the base of a high and beetling mountain, from which a prodigious quantity of large stones had but lately fallen, so that the pathway was nearly blocked up, and the danger from fresh disruptions was by no means small. We now commenced our ascent of the mountain-road, which wore a very craggy and menacing aspect,

> ——————" and still at every fall,
> Down the steep windings of the channel'd rock,
> Remurmuring, rushed the congregated floods
> With hoarser inundation."

The cataracts were in many places of superior grandeur, especially one near the embouchure of the river, where the size of the unbroken sheet of water, twenty feet in breadth by thirty in height; the rapidity of the current; the clouds of mist and foam; and the tremendous dash of the liquid element, all combined to produce a very powerful and sublime effect. The surrounding tract was entirely divested of vegetation; and, as we ascended, it got more rocky and uneven, presenting on the general surface alternate beds of now and basaltiform cellular lava. A little after midnight we gained the summit of the pass, which might have an elevation of nearly 3000 feet above the level of the sea. The prospect was extensive and very romantic, yet wild and barren in the extreme. The sun was hid from our view by the promontories towards the north, but the whole horizon in that direction appeared in a blaze, and we were scarcely sensible of any difference between day and night.

Descending from the mountains, we passed through a pretty extensive tract of underwood, and entered a beautiful inhabited district in front of the *Bardastrand* precipices, in which the projecting promontories terminate along the northern shore of the *Breidefiord*. The sea is evidently at a remote period washed the base of these precipices; but

having gradually receded, beautiful alluvial plains have been formed, the greatest part of which is now covered with grass. The farms lay scattered under the lee of the mountains; numerous flocks of sheep were enjoying their nightly repose; the night was tranquil and serene; the speckled *Breidafiord* lay before us in all its wide expanse; while the snow-capped mountains of *Snafellsness*, receding in beautiful perspective from the royal Yökul, reflected a golden splendour on the surrounding atmosphere.

To the east of the tabular mountain *Hagafiall*, we passed *Haga*, one of the finest farms in Iceland. In point of situation, extent, and the richness of its vegetation, it is only surpassed by few. Here even a foreigner might enjoy a kind of earthly paradise; yet, strange to tell, though its present occupant, who is a native Icelander, might have spent his days on this spot in tranquillity and ease, he has lately abandoned his retreat, and involved himself in all the cares and anxieties of trade. Having slept a few hours at *Hammar*, I proceeded on to *Briâmslak*, where I immediately ordered a boat to be got ready to carry me over to *Flatey*. As it was some hours, however, before the people could be collected, I repaired, during the interval, to a ravine in the mountain behind the parsonage, which exhibits one of the most interesting displays of *surturbrand* to be met with on the island.

Compared with others in the vicinity, the mountain is but of inconsiderable height, not appearing to rise to an elevation of more than 600 feet. A torrent from the rising hills behind has cut its way through the different horizontal strata of which it is composed, so that a cleft presents itself between forty and fifty yards in depth. The east side of this cleft is entirely covered with debris, except at some particular spots, where rugged masses of a yellowish tuffa tower above the surface; but the west side is more perpendicular, and consists of ten or twelve strata of surturbrand, lava, basalt, tuffa, and indurated clay, successively piled above each other. The *surturbrand* is undermost, and occupies four layers, which are separated from each other by intermediate

beds of soft sand-stone or clay. These layers are of unequal thickness, from a foot and a half to three feet, and run to the length of about thirty yards, when they disappear in the debris. They differ also in quality: the two lowest exhibiting the most perfect specimens of mineralized wood, free from all foreign admixture, of a jet black; and such pieces as have been exposed to the sun shine with great lustre, and are very splintery in their fracture. The numerous knots, roots, &c. and the annual circles observable in the ends of the trunks or branches, removed every doubt of the vegetable origin of this curious substance. The only changes it has undergone are induration and compression; having been impregnated with bituminous sap, and flattened by the enormous weight of the superincumbent rocks. Some few branches stretch at times across the bed, but in general they all lie parallel with one another, and are frequently pressed together, so as to form a solid mass. The third stratum is not so pure, being mixed with a considerable portion of ferruginous matter; grey externally, but black in the fracture, has no lustre, and is much heavier than the former, yet possesses evident traits of its vegetable character. The fourth or uppermost stratum consists of what the Icelanders call *stein-brand*, or coal, from which it differs only in the absence of the gloss, and its containing a quantity of earthy matter. It still retains some faint marks of wood.

Remarkable as the appearance of this rock-wood undoubtedly is, a still more surprising phenomenon makes its appearance between the second and third strata, viz. a bed of dark grey schistus, about four inches in thickness, that admits of being divided into numerous thin plates, many of which possess the tenuity of the finest writing paper, and discover on both sides the most beautiful and accurate impressions of *leaves*, with all their ramifications of nerves, ribs, and fibres, in the best state of preservation. The whole of the schistose body is, in fact, nothing but an accumulation of leaves closely pressed together, and partially interlaid with a fine alluvial clay. It is also worthy of notice, that when you separate any of the leaves from the mass,

they are uniformly of a greyish or brown colour on the surface, and black on the opposite side. Most of those on the specimens now before me are of the common poplar, *(populus tremula,)* and some of them, in the judgment of an eminent botanical gentleman,* appear to be of the *populus talka-mahaka.* A few birch and willow leaves are also observable, but very small in size: whereas many of the poplar leaves are upwards of three inches in breadth.

It would appear from the accounts of Olafsen and Povelsen, † as also from those of Olavius, ‡ that a bed of *surturbrand* extends through the whole of the north-western peninsula. In *Dala* Syssel it is found in *Svinadal* and *Gnupufell;* at *Barmahlid, Briâmslak, Hammur, Raudasand,* and in *Forsdal* in the Syssel of *Bardastrand;* but in still greater abundance in *Isafiord's* Syssel, viz. in the mountains *Stigahlid, Granahlid, Straumneshlid, Skorar,* and *Sandvik.* It has also been met with in *Barafell, Margretarfell, Steckiarmo, Torfvafell, Lagrihvam,* and *Thrudardal* on the east side of the peninsula. It is chiefly used by the natives for the smithy; but as it is very hard, and susceptible of a high polish, they also make tables of it, and other ornamental articles of household furniture. It is only, however, in the damp houses of the Icelanders, that such specimens can be preserved, as they crack and split when exposed to the heat of the fire or the sun.

Scouting the idea of a subterranean forest as too absurd to merit the slightest consideration, there are only three ways in which we can suppose the *surturbrand* to have originated. *First,* Large forests may have existed in this quarter of the island at a remote period, and may have been overturned and entombed during some of the volcanic revolutions of subsequent date. *Secondly,* It may be the remains of drift-timber, conveyed hither from the Missouri and other rivers in North America, or from the northern coasts of Siberia. Or, *lastly,* It may have grown in a former world, §

* Professor Hornemann of Copenhagen.

† Reise, [illegible] ‡ Oeconomical Reise, pp. 747, 752.

§ Let this digression should offend any of my readers, I beg it to be under

and been reduced to its present state in one of the great catastrophes which have so materially changed the surface of the earth.

The name and black carbonated appearance of the fossil, together with the circumstance that lava is always found in greater or less quantities in the vicinity of the strata which it forms, would almost seem to favour the first of these suppositions; but it is self-evident, that had the wood ever been in actual contact with lava, it must either have been entirely consumed, or, if the fiery torrent had lost too much of its heat to produce that effect, it must, nevertheless, have thrown the trees about in the wildest disorder, and could never have left them in the regular longitudinal position they at present occupy. This regularity of position, which obtains throughout the whole extent of the strata, presents an insuperable argument against the *surturbrand's* having been reduced to its present state by the operation of fire, though it cannot be denied, that this element has subsequently effected, in part at least, the disposition of the substances that rest above it. Even the second conjecture of Von Troil,* that the

stood in the sense of ὁ πότε κόσμος of Peter, 2 Epist. iii. 6; though Gen. x. 25. renders it extremely probable, that besides what took place at the deluge, our globe was subjected to another important revolution in the days of Peleg: for it is worthy of observation, that the verb פלג *phalag*, properly signifies to *disrupt; to sever or divide with violence.*

* *Letters on Iceland*, p. 44. Eng. Trans. 2d Edit. As it may interest the reader to peruse Profes or Bergman's description of the specimens sent him by Von Troil, I shall insert it at this place. "The slate which you have brought from Iceland splits into thin plates, that discover many sorts of impressions, particularly of leaves; the colour is black, and it is exactly of the same nature as the common aluminous slate. The two pieces of surturbrand, or fossil wood, which you brought with you, bear evident marks of a vegetable composition: and I may almost affirm, with perfect certainty, that the largest is a kind of pinus abies; on the outside are barks and branches, and in the inside all the rings of the sap appear; the lesser is a piece of rind without wood; both are black, quite soft, easily take fire, and flame in burning. After the flame is extinguished, one hundred parts afford forty-two parts of coals, which, after being only calcined, yield two parts of yellowish brown earth, that is attracted by the magnet, and partly dissolves with acids; it makes some effervescence with borax and fusible urinous salt; the coal also causes a little ebullition at first but does not entirely dissolve it." *Ibid.* p. 330.

trees were originally overturned by an earthquake, and afterwards interred by a shower of hot ashes from a volcano, is irreconcileable with the fact above stated.

We must, therefore, have recourse to water, as the agent by which the principal disposition of the *surturbrand* has been effected. The idea of its having originally been drift-timber forcibly suggests itself, when we reflect, that those parts of Iceland in which it is most abundant, are the very tracts where the greatest quantity of timber is annually thrown up from the sea. Nor can the height to which the stratum of *surturbrand* rises, form any objection to this hypothesis, as ancient drift-timber has been found partially interred at the distance of 3000 feet from the beach. * The leaves found at *Brîâmslæk* are confessedly unique, as nothing similar occurs, in conjunction with the brand, elsewhere on the island. No poplar ever grew here within the memory of man; and were it certain that some of the leaves are of the *populus takka-mahaka*, an ancient communication might be traced between this island and the opposite coasts of America.

However, as the *surturbrand* is found in such immense quantities, and where it makes its appearance on one side of a mountain, it uniformly occurs, nearly about the same level, on the opposite side; as these mountains are of the more regular kind, consisting of numerous horizontal strata; and as, in many instances, fifteen or twenty of these strata are piled above the bed of mineralised wood, the theory will be freest from embarrassment that refers its entombment to one or other of those dreadful elemental conflicts to which the terraqueous globe has repeatedly been subjected. It formed perhaps part of the forests that grew on the sunk continent that now supports the Atlantic, and which, on the submersion of that continent, must have been completely overturned, and carried in various directions, according to the motion of the currents. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact, that the bed of *surturbrand* in the west of Iceland, runs uniformly in the direction of N. E. by N. N. E.;

* Olavius, *ut sup.* p. 16.

and however broken and separated by the intervening bays and vallies, forms one continued stratum in the crust of the earth. * That it is found to dip in some places more than others, is a necessary consequence of the earthquakes and volcanic derangements of subsequent date. The occurrence of trees, and other vegetables in coal formations, is well known to miners, and all who possess any acquaintance with geology; and it certainly deserves consideration, that *surturbrand* occurs in the coal-mines of *Faroe*, embedded in a yellowish alluvial formation, resembling the tuffas or puzzuolana of Iceland. †

To return from this geologic digression. After partaking of an excellent dinner at *Briámslæk*, we put to sea; and as the weather was uncommonly fine, we had a pleasant passage to *Flatey*, where we arrived at six o'clock. I here engaged the boat belonging to the clergyman, who accompanied me himself to the *Svefneyar*, or the Islands of Sleep, where it was my intention to have enjoyed a portion of that blessing; but, on our arrival, I had the disappointment to find that all the men were absent at the fishing; and the distance to the next islands was too great for the females to venture alone; so that I must have been considerably retarded in my journey, had it not been for the kindness of Sira Thomas, who undertook to row me himself with a fresh set of female rowers, provided I would give up my night's rest, as he was obliged to be back on *Flatey* by Saturday evening.

Fatigued as I was, I willingly submitted to the further privation of sleep, with the view of getting once more on *terra firma*, before any change took place in the weather. We accordingly lost no time in refreshing ourselves with eider-duck eggs and cream, and again embarked about nine o'clock; but we had not proceeded far, when we were alarmed to find, that the person from the *Svefneyar*, who had undertaken to be our pilot, was ignorant of the sounds through which we had to pass, and no person in the boat had ever

* Olavius, *Reise*, pp. 599, 600.
† Olavius, *Reise*, p. 599.

been that way before. What greatly increased our alarm, was the suspicion of concealed rocks, which, as the water was falling, exposed us to great danger.

About midnight, when we had cleared all the small islands, and were about to enter the mouth of the *Gilsfiord*, the mountains at the termination of the bay began to get shrouded in clouds, and in less than half an hour it began to blow violently from the N. E. We had also to row against a furious current, and the boat being diminutive in size, every wave threatened to swallow us up; we were at times completely covered with spray; both the courage and strength of the females failed; and we had more than once the immediate prospect of a watery grave.

However, by the kind providence of God, we were preserved in safety, and at three o'clock in the morning we landed on *Randsey*, a small island, on which we found a solitary, but superior farm, the proprietor of which gave us the most welcome reception. As we were starving with cold, the simple shelter of a house proved no ordinary comfort; but we had scarcely sat down in the room, ere the landlady made her appearance with large bowls of coffee, which she presented in the most courteous manner. An excellent bed was immediately prepared for me, where I enjoyed six hours refreshing sleep; and after breakfasting on eggs and boiled rice, the peasant put me ashore on the mainland a little below *Skard*, to which I instantly repaired.

Skard is inhabited by the Sysselman, Mr Skule Magnusson, to visit whom was the object of my return to this part of *Dala* Syssel. It is situated at the foot of a low mountain, which terminates the bold range of mountains that extend southwards along the coast, and commands an extensive view of the *Breidafiord*, and its islands, with the majestic mountains on both sides. Owing, however, to the height of an adjoining mountain, there are five or six weeks in winter during which its inhabitants never behold the sun.

Mr Magnusson was not expected home till evening; but I was politely received by his lady, and provided with the needful refreshments. During the interval, I made an ex-

cursion of about five miles to the church and parsonage of *Ballará*, where I spent the afternoon in a very interesting manner with the clergyman, whom I found to be an enlightened and judicious man, a friend of the plain unsophisticated sense of Scripture, and consequently an opposer of the boasted illumination of some modern theologians. In the evening he accompanied me back to *Skard*, where we found the Sysselman, who had just arrived, a frank, polite, and downright Icelander, with more of the appearance of a magistrate than any Sheriff I have met with on the island.

The 18th, being the Lord's day, I stopped with the hospitable family at *Skard*. As there was no public service, the Sysselman collected the whole of his family about eleven o'clock, and went through the exercises of domestic worship with a life and energy that I have scarcely seen equalled by any of the Icelandic clergy. What an influence the example of such a man must have in forming the manners of the inhabitants, and confirming them in those habits of devotion by which the nation has long been distinguished, and which still obtain in such parts of the island as remain free from the contamination of foreign licentiousness!

On the morning of the 19th I again left *Skard*, and proceeded up the gulley, from which it takes its name, where nothing remarkable occurred, excepting a large cairn, marking the grave of a female who lived in the vicinity, about the time of the introduction of Christianity into the island, but who was so inimical to its tenets, and so grossly addicted to her heathen superstitions, that, when dying, she gave strict orders to her friends to bury her here, that her manes might not be disturbed by the church bells of *Skard* and *Budardal*, either of which places lies at an equal distance from the cairn.

Passing a little to the right of *Budardal*, where the late learned Magnus Ketilson lived, and where he successfully attempted several branches of agriculture, I came again to the shore of the *Gilsfiord*, which I skirted for some time, admiring the numerous horizontal strata that presented themselves to my view in the face of the adjacent mountains.

and especially the grand colonnades of basaltic rock which lined the beach. One spot in particular created uncommon interest. The columns were perfectly perpendicular, from thirty to forty feet in height, and from a foot and a half to two feet in diameter. Most of them were five and seven-sided, and the articulations were in many places of considerable length. A little farther on, I fell in with a bed of *surturbrand*, visible to the length of twenty yards, but, dipping rapidly towards the north, it is soon lost in the sand along the beach. This declination struck me the more, as that of the *surturbrand* at *Briâmslek* was towards the south; but I soon perceived that it must have been occasioned by the revolution to which the *Breidafiord*, that lies between them, owed its existence. The stratum of pure *surturbrand* at this place, does not exceed three inches in thickness. It is embedded in a yellow argillaceous sand which meets the beach below; and, at the height of two feet above the brand, it is relieved by a two-inch thick bed of schistose *steinbrand*; this gives way to four feet of tuffa, above which lies a thick stratum of lava, the uppermost substance in the tract.

After riding along a very stony road in front of the mountains, I recognised the district of *Saurbæ*, and proceeded across the marshes to the farm of *Hvol*, where I had left my horses on the 6th instant. It gave me no small joy to find that they were completely recruited, and fit for the remaining part of my tour.

CHAP. XIII.

Journey into Stranda Syssel, and return to Reykiavik—Gilsfiord—Steindalsheidi—Fell—Paradise—Drift Timber—Stad—Interesting Interview with the Dean—Bitruhâls—Holltavörðu-heidi—View of the Sun at Midnight—Mount Bauda—Reykiadal—Reykhollt—Snorro Sturluson's Bath—Biographical Sketch of Snorro—Hot Springs of Reykiadal—Saurbæ—Hebrew Scholar—Hvalfiord—Kiosar Syssel—Reykiavik.

HAVING rested about five hours at *Hvol*, I got the peasant to proceed with me unto *Stranda* Syssel, which lies on the east or opposite side of the peninsula. For the first three hours we pursued the same road I had formerly taken along the southern shore of the *Gilsfiord;* and though it was now the 19th of June, I could discover no improvement in the season; the wreaths of snow appeared to possess their former bulk, and the frost and N. E. wind were equally keen. On turning the end of the bay, we struck off, through a narrow pass, into *Steindals-heidi,* where we had much difficulty in passing the snows, and evading the tremendous chasms which every now and then projected across the path. The mountains on both sides were of an ordinary height, and partially covered with grass, but the extreme coldness of the winds, which almost incessantly blow from the N. E. prevents vegetation from attaining any degree of maturity.

About six o'clock on the morning of the 20th, we reached a more auspicious region; the parish of *Fell*, consisting of a number of fruitful dales, which run up between the mountains, from the termination of the narrow but beautiful bay

of *Kollafiord*. At *Fell* there is a small church, in which I was rather surprised to find a large wooden image of St Olaf, King of Norway, which is said to have been drifted up here by the sea, and most likely belonged to some of the earlier navigators, who did not judge it safe to venture on the tempestuous ocean, without a representation of their tutelary saint.

Having slept a few hours in the farm-house, I proceeded along the northern shore of the *Kollafiord*, which is lined at various places with curious walls of basaltic rock, and came in the course of an hour to *Steingrimsfiord*, the largest bay on the east side of the peninsula. It is upwards of twenty miles in length, and about ten at its greatest breadth, and has been navigated, in former times, by the Spaniards and Irish, the ruins of whose houses are still to be seen. Strange as it may appear to the inhabitants of warmer climes, and a more grateful soil, even the most distant districts of the comparatively barren Iceland are not without their *Paradise*; there being a place of that name on the north side of the bay. So true it is, that

——"Still, even here, content can spread a charm,
Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm.
Though poor the peasant's hut, his feasts though small,
He sees his little lot, the lot of all;
Sees no contiguous palace rear its head,
To shame the meanness of his humble shed;
No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal,
To make him loathe his *poor* and scanty meal;
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil."

As I passed over the extensive plains, between the bay and the mountains, I came up to a fine large tent, which I supposed to be inhabited by a person of consequence, but after exchanging some vain guesses on the subject with my guide, we examined it, and were equally surprised and amused to find it occupied by a *cow*. The poor animal had hurt her leg, and there being no carts in use, it was impos-

sible to convey her home to the farm. She was now nearly recovered, and on my return the following day, had actually been removed by the peasant.

Many of the plains in this quarter are suffered to lie waste, but would furnish excellent farm lands were they to undergo cultivation. Several of the farm houses wear a very superior appearance, especially those of *Heydalsâ* and *Vidardalsâ*, which may partly be accounted for by the great abundance of drift-timber with which the shores of this bay are covered. Each farm has its division of the beach, and at stated periods the wood is removed to a sufficient distance from the water. The advantages resulting from this produce of the sea in some measure compensate for the want of native forests, and are fully appreciated by the Icelanders; so that many of the coast-places sell high, and are often held in possession, or rented by persons who live on the opposite side of the island. Besides using the wood for their own private purposes, the inhabitants of this Syssel fabricate all kinds of small cooper-work during the winter, and thus provide themselves with a new species of barter against the summer.

In the course of the day I had several rivers to ford, but the coldness of the atmosphere preventing the snows on the mountains from melting, I got over them all without much difficulty. Towards evening the ride began to prove very fatiguing, owing to the inequalities of the road, and my having been deceived as to the distance, not supposing *Stad*, the limit of my journey, to be more than two-thirds of the way. Having crossed a rugged and stony tract, which juts out into the bay, I again reached its southern shore, and entering the fine valley in which it terminates, I rode on with increased speed to the parsonage, which I reached about nine o'clock. It is very agreeably situated on the north side of the valley, near a considerable river, which here empties itself into the bay. The valley itself appeared to be rich in grass; and there was more vegetation on the surrounding mountains than I should have supposed from their northerly situation.

From the different accounts that had been given me of the Dean, Sira Hiallte Jonson, I was led to form a very high idea of his character, but on becoming personally acquainted with him, my expectations were not only met but greatly exceeded. His external appearance was in no respect different from that of the neighbouring peasants, as I took him at an unawares, repairing one of his fences; but I soon found in him, not only the kind, hospitable, and unassuming Icelander, but the consistent Christian, and the enlightened, zealous, and indefatigable servant of Jesus Christ. His learning is that of the *Skalholt* school, increased by private application, and the improvement of his time since leaving that seminary, in studying the Scriptures, the ways and operations of Providence, and the different phenomena of mind and matter, as discoverable within the sphere he occupies. His theological system is that of Luther, to which he has undeviatingly adhered, notwithstanding the manifold temptations which the scepticism and infidelity of modern times have thrown in his way. The duties of the Dean's office are chiefly confined to the secular part of the ecclesiastical state in Iceland; but Sira Hiallte, though strictly conscientious in his discharge of this part of his office, views it merely as the subordinate and less important part. His primary concern is the advancement of the spiritual and eternal welfare of the clergy and people committed to his charge, which he seeks by every means in his power—preaching the word in season and out of season, charging, admonishing, rebuking, &c. He also undertakes long journies, for the purpose of catechising youth, and inspecting the state of his parishes, and maintains in his own family habits of piety and religion.

The *Stad* family forms almost a congregation of itself, consisting of not fewer than twenty-eight persons, to provide for whom requires no small share of prudent economy. It is worthy of notice, that Mrs Jonson derives her descent from one of the kings of Ireland, through the line of a family which settled here at an early period of Icelandic history. In no part of the world do we find a people more te-

nacious of genealogical descent than the natives of this distant island; nor is there perhaps a people that have it more in their power to ascertain its degrees with accuracy, as they have always been animated by a spirit of literary research, and are in possession of a number of written monuments which enter into the minutest detail of the family transactions of their ancestors.

On the 21st I was under the necessity of bidding adieu to the interesting and pious family at *Stad*, after partaking of an excellent breakfast provided me by Mrs Jonson. The Dean himself, and one of his sons, did me the honour to accompany me two days' journey to the southward. The good man entered with his whole soul into the plan of the Bible Society, and hailed the present opening of Divine Providence as the dawn of a glorious day to the Icelandic church.

We arrived at *Fell* about seven o'clock in the evening, where I had my tent pitched; and set off the following morning across the steep mountain road of *Bitruhâls*, on the west side of which the valley is situated that contains the *Mokollshaugar*, a number of banks and rising grounds, famous for the excellent porcelain earth with which they abound. * As we proceeded up the ascent we were much retarded by a lake, which was entirely covered with ice and snow, and the ice being in many places rotten beneath, the horses had nearly sunk into the water. On reaching the summit, we were gratified with an extensive and interesting prospect. Directly before us, to the south-east, lay the long *Hofs-Yökul*, which was relieved on the south by the vast ice-mountains to the west of *Blâfell*, and on the north by the mountains in *Hunavatns-Syssel*, which project in a northerly direction between the *Skaga* and *Hrutafiords*. Turning towards the north, we had a fine view of the bold promontories of *Stranda Syssel*, above which towered the *Drânga* and *Glâma* ice-mountains, the only masses of the kind in that quarter of the island. They are not so high as the

* Mohr. p. 288.

other ice mountains, but exhibit the same marks of volcanization. *

Descending from the mountains, we came to the northern shore of the *Bitrufiord*, a beautiful frith, which runs about twelve miles into the country, but, excepting at the mouth, it does not exceed a mile in breadth. As there was no ferry for the accommodation of travellers, we were obliged to ride round the bay, which added several miles to our journey; however, the weather being uncommonly fine, and our conversation increasing in interest the longer it was continued, we were altogether unconscious of the length of the road. After crossing the mountain of *Stickuhâls*, we arrived at the western shore of the extensive *Hrutafiord*, which we skirted, following its numerous sinuosities, and passing now and then a solitary farm, till about midnight, when we reached *Bæ*, the abode of the Sysselman, Mr Jonson, who, with his family, was still on foot, and received us in the most courteous and hospitable manner.

The 23d, at noon, I tore myself away from the excellent Dean, who intended to spend the rest of the day in catechising, and proceeded with the Sysselman to the termination of the *Hrutafiord*, where he engaged a young man to guide me through the desert tract which occupies the intermediate space between the north country and the Syssel of *Borgarfiord* in the south. The road is known by the name of *Hollta-vördu-heidi*; and after leaving the river which empties itself into the bay, and here runs in a deep and confined channel, it stretches across an immense number of small heights partially covered with moss, and bearing every character of volcanic origin.

We set out for the mountains about seven o'clock in the evening, and continued gradually to ascend till near twelve at night, when I was favoured with the most novel and interesting midnight scene I ever witnessed: the sun remaining as if stationary a little above the horizon for about half an hour, when he again commenced his ascent, and pursued

* Olaf en og Povelsen, p. 405.

his steady, undeviating course, through the northern hemisphere.

At first I was afraid I should have been denied this gratification; for, after lingering for a long time above the high mountains in the remote tracts of *Stranda* Syssel, he at last dipped behind them, but as I rode on, and still gained a higher part of the desert, I was agreeably surprised to observe the shadow of my horse on the height before me, and turning round, I found that the sun had again left the mountains, and now appeared almost close to the surface of the ocean. Not being certain whether he might not have dipped during his absence, I kept my eye steadily fixed upon him, when I found that he still continued to decline, but when within a very little of the horizon, he remained in the same degree of altitude, only going forwards, and as mentioned above, again began his ascent in the course of half an hour.

Though my curiosity had already been highly gratified in contemplating the multiplicity of surprising phenomena which this island presents to the view of the traveller, I felt myself compelled to assign the prospect now before me an important place in my assemblage of wonders. Close by, towards the west, lay the *Trölla-kyrkia*, or "Giant's Church," an ancient volcano, the walls of whose crater rose in a very fantastic manner into the atmosphere, while the lower regions were entirely covered with snow; to the south and east stretched an immense impenetrable waste, enlivened on the one hand by a number of lakes, and in the distance by vast ice-mountains, whose glassy surface, receiving the rays of the midnight sun, communicated a golden tinge to the surrounding atmosphere; while, towards the north, the long bay of *Hrutafiord* gradually opened into the ocean. Here the king of day, like a vast globe of fire, stretched his sceptre over the realms of night—divested indeed of his splendour, but more interesting, because more subject to view. The singing of swans on the neighbouring lakes added to the novelty of the scene, and called forth ascriptions of praise to Him whose "works are all made in wisdom," and

tend in one way or another to magnify his glory, and advance the general welfare of created being.

As I continued my journey, the train of my meditation fell upon that sublime passage in the prophet Isaiah, where, describing in prophetic anticipation the future prosperity of the church, he declares, "*Thy sun shall no more go down*, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Isa. ix. 20. In the spectacle I had just beheld, the prophetic image itself was fully unfolded to my view; and the contemplation of the universality and perpetuity of Divine Light, in connection with the means at present so effectively used for its diffusion throughout the world, animated me to devote myself afresh to the work of the Lord, and, in reliance on grace from above, to contribute, to the utmost of my power, towards the impartation of that light to every human soul.

The tract now began to slope towards the south country; and, after crossing a stream of lava, we descended to the banks of the *Nordurâ*, which we forded repeatedly, now riding on the right, and now on the left side of the river. About seven in the morning we reached the farm of *Hvam*, in *Nordurârdal*, where I pitched my tent, and slept till noon; when finding it still too early to re-load my horses, I resolved to ascend Mount *Baula*, a singular cone in the vicinity, which is at least 3000 feet in height, and is visible from many distant parts of the island. It forms the southern boundary of a vast oval valley, or crater, containing several other cones of a smaller size, the red appearance of which, and the general aspect of the surrounding tract, leave no room to doubt of their having been produced by volcanic agency.

On reaching the base of *Baula*, I was surprised to find the whole of its lower regions consisted of a singular kind of white-coloured basaltes, none of which lay in their original bed, but were scattered about, and piled one above another in the wildest disorder. They are, for the most part, five and seven-sided; some have three, and a few nine sides;

and measure from three to seven feet in length, by five and nine inches in diameter. I here scrambled for more than an hour among these broken pillars, not without considerable danger, from their loose state, and the excessive steepness of the mountain; and the longer I continued among them, the more my curiosity was excited, to investigate the region from which they had been precipitated. However, before I had reached the elevation of 1200 feet, the mountain got shrouded in mist; it began to blow and rain with considerable violence; and a regard for my own safety and comfort, not any tincture of the superstition that had all the while assailed the mind of my attendant, * prompted me to descend as quickly as possible, and seek for shelter in the tranquillity of the neighbouring vale. Two basaltic pillars from this mountain, which were afterwards conveyed to me by the peasant of Hvam, I forwarded to Scotland, where I intended to have submitted them to chemical examination; but on my arrival, I was sorry to find they had both been taken out of the box, and not so much as a single specimen left to serve the purpose I had in view in sending them home. Olafsen and Povelsen call the Baula stone, *Saxum Thophaceum albidem columnare sive Basaltiforme*, and regard it as the production of boiling water, to which they ascribe the origination of all the white-coloured mountains in Iceland. † It is much to be regretted that *Mount Baula* was not examined by Sir George Mackenzie and his party, when they were in the vicinity, as it is incontestibly the most remarkable mountain on the island, and might have fur-

* The ideas which the natives entertain of this mountain, are accurately depicted by Mr Hooker: "The mountain, also, called *Boula*, from its great height and conical figure, formed a prominent feature in the scene: it is likewise deserving of notice, on account of the vulgar idea, that there is on its summit, (which, by the bye, has proved inaccessible to all who have attempted to reach it,) an entrance to a rich and beautiful country; a country constantly green, and abounding in trees, inhabited by a dwarfish race of men, whose sole employment is the care of their fine flocks of sheep." *Tour in Iceland*, vol. i. p. 209.

† Reise, p. 133.

nished them with some new and curious facts in geological science.

The *Baula* basalt is chiefly used for tombstones, to which it is naturally adapted, without the assistance of art. That it was applied to this purpose, so early as the eleventh century, appears from the specimen at *Borg* in the Syssel of *Myrar*, containing an epitaph on Kiartan Olafson, who was assassinated in *Svinadal*, in the year 1004. As it is the most ancient Runic inscription found in Iceland, I will here insert a copy of it, taken from the xvii. table of Olafsen og Povelsen :—

HER LIGR HALR KARTAN,

"Here lies the brave Kiartan."

The last character is composed of the Runic letters signifying "Olafson." The smaller characters at the end are no longer legible, but are supposed to have signified, *Feck kif af sâri deidi*, "Died of a wound inflicted in strife;" or *Fyri svik of sâri dauda*, "Died of a treacherous wound."

About five o'clock I again struck my tent, and proceeded under the guidance of the peasant across the hills that lie to the south-east of *Hvam*. They are very stony, of no great height, and are regularly intersected by long parallel dales, and the whole tract indicates the operations of the sea at some former period. Having crossed the *Thverâ*, a fine salmon river, which falls into the *Hvitâ*, a little farther down, I gained a beautiful birch wood, which extended over a considerable flat, and on which my eye rested with considerable delight, not having seen a shrub for several weeks. In the evening I pitched my tent in the plain before the church and farm of *Nordtunga*, and made a delicious supper on fresh salmon, which was kindly sent me by the widow who occupies the farm.

Next day I rode on to *Sidumula*, where I expected to find the Sysselman, Mr Otteson, but on my arrival I was informed of his having gone with his lady to *Hvitârvallir*. My disappointment, however, was in some measure retriev-

* Rehe, p. 254.

ed by my falling in with the clergyman, Sira Hiörtr Jonson of *Gilsbacka*, who had the kindness to accompany me to *Reykholtt*, the ancient residence of the great northern Herodotus, Snorro Sturluson. Having crossed the *Hvitá*, and struggled through a number of dangerous bogs, we entered *Reykiadal*, or the "Valley of Smoke," justly so named from the numerous columns of vapour which its hot springs incessantly send forth into the atmosphere.

Reykholtt is at present occupied by Sira Egert Jonson, the Dean of *Borgarfiord* Syssel. He was also absent on our arrival, but we were made welcome by the female part of the family, and on the arrival of my baggage, I had my tent pitched on the summit of the *virki*, * a circular mound of earth, forming the most eminent remains of the fortification, which, in former times, surrounded the farm. On his removing to this place, Snorro Sturluson not only repaired and enlarged the buildings, but inclosed the whole with a high and strong wall as a defence against the attacks of his enemies: for, in spite of the excellent regulations which existed during the Icelandic republic for securing individual safety, the intestine broils of the different chieftains, in which Snorro, in his time, had an eminent share, exposed the leading men to the rage and wantonness of the contending parties. The extent of the wall may yet be traced, but it is no where so conspicuous as here, where a watch-tower seems to have stood, and through which a subterraneous passage has communicated with the *Snorra-laug*, or "Snorro's Bath," situated directly at its base.

This bath, which has survived the ravages of nearly 600 years, without requiring any reparation, is doubtless, next to the *Heimskringla*, the proudest specimen of Snorro's ingenuity, and forms a nobler monument than any which the most zealous of his admirers could have erected to his memory. It is perfectly circular in form, about fifteen feet in diameter, and is constructed of hewn stones, which fit each

* Hence Scuthwark, Icel. *Sud virki*, the southern fortification constructed by the Danes in the days of Ethelred, and so called because it lay on the south side of the Thames.

other in the most exact manner, and have been joined together by a fine cement of bolus, and other matter found in the neighbourhood. The floor is paved with the same kind of tophaceous stone which composes the wall, and a stone bench, capable of containing upwards of thirty persons, surrounds the inside of the bath. The water is supplied from a hot spouting fountain, called *Scribla*, which is situated about 500 feet in a northerly direction, in a hot morass, where numerous boiling springs make their appearance. It is conveyed by means of a subterraneous aqueduct, constructed of stones, which are cemented together in the same way as those which form the bath. In the year 1783, this conduit was deranged by an earthquake, and again repaired by the Reverend Dean Finn Jonson, afterwards bishop of *Skalholt*;* but it has since been broken at different places. On reaching the bason, the hot water is admitted through a small aperture, and when a sufficient quantity has been received, the orifice is closed up with a stone, and the water runs in its common channel down the valley. There is another opening at the bottom of the bason through which the water is suffered to run out, and the bath is by this means rendered perfectly clean.

In most of the descriptions we have of this famous bath, it has been affirmed, that a supply of cold water is likewise brought to the bason for the purpose of reducing the temperature; but the statement is inaccurate, as there does not exist any cold water in the vicinity, nor can any other be obtained for economical or domestic purposes than what is brought from the hot springs.† Those who avail themselves of it, have to wait till the water in the bason has sufficiently cooled, when they descend by a flight of steps, and may have any depth they choose, not exceeding four feet. As the floor recedes from the centre it gradually becomes shallower, and close to the bench it is not deeper than to ad-

* See Hauksbogla, vol. i. p. xxxi. of the Preface.

† "In propinquo nulla existet frigida, unde in *Reikholto* nulla bibitur, nullaque ad usum domesticum et œconomicum, quam hæcce adhibetur aqua." Ibid. p. xxx.

mit of children standing in it. In former times, it was customary for the whole family, without distinction of age or sex, to go to the bath together, and in some parts of the island it is practised at this day.

Owing to the infrequency of its use, I found *Snorra-laug* rather in a neglected state; the water was muddy, and a quantity of soil had collected at the bottom. Having intimated a wish to bathe in it, the plug was taken out of the draining hole, and the current of hot water from *Scribla* was suffered to flow freely through it the whole of the night, so that on the morning of the 26th, before dressing, I stepped down to it from my tent, and had an opportunity of enjoying and appreciating to the full the beneficial luxury of the *laug*.

Besides the bath, the *Lögrétta*, situated nearly in front of the parsonage, and the *Sturlungarcitur*, a part of the churchyard, where the family of the historian is supposed to have been interred, tend to keep up his memory at *Reykhollt*.

Snorro Sturluson, certainly one of the most powerful and celebrated chiefs ever Iceland produced, was born, as has already been noticed in the preceding chapter, at *Hvam*, on the *Hvamsfiord*, in the year 1178. At three years of age, he was sent to *Oddè*, where he received an excellent education from Jon Loptson, a very rich and learned chief, and grandson of Saemund Frode. Having access to the MSS. and other antiquities belonging to the family, it was doubtless here that he laid the foundation of his Eddaic mythology, and cultivated the historical and poetic arts; his proficiency in which afterwards procured him such a high degree of literary fame. On the death of his tutor in 1197, he left *Oddè*, and married the daughter of a rich priest who lived at *Borg*, on the western shore of the *Borgafiord*, by which match he added no less than 4000 rix-dollars to the small property of 160, which was all that had been left him by his father. In the course of a few years, he not only succeeded to the inheritance of *Borg*, but obtained possession of *Reykhollt*, *Bessastad*, and several other considerable farms; and ultimately became so powerful, that he com-

times made his appearance at the national assembly with eight or nine hundred men in his train. His learning and abilities also raised him to the office of *Lögsögumadur*, or Supreme Magistrate, which office he sustained at two different periods.

But the celebrity of Snorro Sturluson was not confined to Iceland. A poem which he composed in praise of Hacon Galin, a powerful Norwegian Iarl, not only procured him the favour of that prince, but paved the way for a visit to that part of the continent, about the year 1218, where he was well received by Skule Iarl, and other noble families, whose exploits had been the subject of his Scaldic muse. He was here raised to the dignity of *Drottseti*, or Lord High Marshal, with which office was afterwards combined that of Lord Lieutenant; and, in return, he engaged to effect the reduction of his native island, under the power of the Iarl, by the mere force of his own private influence. The only apology that can be made for this traitorous conduct is, that Snorro was induced to make the proposition to prevent the island from being invaded by a military force, as he saw the Iarl was determined on its subjugation. The private feuds in which he got involved after his return, prevented him from carrying his design, if it really was sincere, into effect These feuds, kindled for the most part by his own turbulence, ambition, and avarice, at length completely turned the tide of his fortune, and he was not only chased from the most of his estates, but obliged to flee for refuge to Norway, where he was but coolly received; and though he was afterwards created Iarl, he found his safety so much at stake, that he again set sail for Iceland, in the year 1239, contrary to the express orders of his former patron, and took up his abode at *Reykholt*, where he was assassinated on the night of the 22d of September 1241, in the 63d year of his age. His murderer, Gissur Thorvaldson, formerly his son-in-law, had received orders from Hacon, King of Norway, to bring Snorro over [illegible] prisoner; and if this could not be effected, to take away his life: but having an eye to his estates, he resolved at once to adopt the latter measure. It is not un-

worthy of notice, that though Snorro was deeply skilled in the antiquities of his country, he was not able to decipher a letter written to him in a peculiar Runic character, the same night in which he was murdered, and which was designed to apprize him of the impending danger.

The *Heimskringla*, or Chronicle of the Kings of Norway, for which we are indebted to the pen of Snorro, is a master-piece of historical composition, and not only embraces the internal affairs of the Scandinavian kingdoms, but throws much light on the political state of the rest of Europe, especially that of the British islands. It was first published, with a Latin translation, by Peringskiold, in two folio volumes, Stockholm, 1697; but the Copenhagen edition of 1777, 1778, 1783, and 1813, in four volumes folio, with a Danish and Latin version, is vastly superior. There is also every reason to conclude, that our historian collected and arranged the mythological fables and poetic phrases, of which the more recent or prosaic Edda is chiefly composed; as it is certain he is the author of the *Hâttalykill*, or Clavis Metrica, which contains specimens of Scandinavian poetry in a hundred different kinds of verse, most of which appear to have been invented by Snorro himself.

In a clear day, and calm weather, the view from *Reykhollt* is rendered peculiarly interesting by the prodigious clouds of vapour which ascend from various parts of the "Valley of Smoke;" and which, at first sight, would almost lead a stranger to conclude, that a volcanic eruption had actually commenced in the vicinity. As the Dean was not expected home before evening, Mr Jonson and I made a short excursion in the valley, for the purpose of surveying the springs.

We first visited the *Sturlu-reykia-hverar*, situated close to a farm of the same name, about two miles below *Reykhollt*. The principal spring is remarkable for its three apertures, the lowest of which serves as a conduit for the boiling water, while the two that are situate a little higher up answer the purpose of steam-pipes, through which the vapour makes its escape during the discharge of the water. This

of all the springs I have met with in Iceland, most resembles a steam-engine. When an eruption is over, it intermits, and the water sinks out of sight for the space of about fifteen seconds; after which, the engine is again set in motion, the steam rushes out of the two apertures with a loud hissing noise, and a considerable quantity of water is discharged. It is seldom the eruption continues longer than a minute. The water is received about ten yards farther down into a circular bason, which is both used as a bath, and a watering-place for the cattle in winter. The other subordinate springs, especially that called *Hunda-hver*, appear to be connected with the one just described; but, excepting a few incrustations, they present no phenomena worthy of notice.

Our attention was next attracted by a vapour bath, resembling that near *Reykiahlid*,* a low building constructed over the stream of boiling water before it reaches the reservoir of the principal spring, from which it is separated by a thin floor, so that the heat in the inside is 62° of Fahrenheit, though the door remain unshut. The passage forming the entrance is not only long, but extremely low and confined, so that we were obliged to creep into it. We found a quantity of clothes hung up in it to dry, the only purpose for which it is used, except when frequented for the cure of diseases.

We now proceeded to the *Tungu-hverar*, which lie at the distance of a mile farther down, on the same side of the valley; and as the wind blew the smoke directly upon us, it was not without some danger that we approached them. Having cautiously leaped over a rivulet of boiling water, I took my station in front of the springs; but, ere I was aware, I was nearly suffocated with hot and dense vapours, which so closely surrounded me, that I could neither see my companion, nor how to make my escape from the spot on which I stood. At the distance of only a few yards before me roared not fewer than sixteen boiling cauldrons, the contents of which, raised in broken columns of various heights,

were splashed about the margins, and ran with great impetuosity in numberless streamlets down the precipice on which the springs are situate. What augmented the irksomeness of my situation, was the partial darkness in which the whole tract was enveloped, so that it was impossible for me to form any distinct idea of the terrifying operations that were going on before me. After the wind had somewhat abated, the vapours began to ascend more perpendicularly, and I again discovered Mr Jonson, who was in no small degree concerned about my safety.

Having re-crossed the scalding rivulet, and joined my companion, we ascended the eminence, on the east side of which the kettles are situate, where we supposed it would be possible to have taken a full view of them; but the steam being blown down upon them by the wind, they were almost entirely eclipsed, and we had no opportunity of contemplating the beautiful alternations so minutely described by Sir George Mackenzie and other travellers. The whole of the eminence consists of several layers of red, blue, and white bolus, which is so soft, that a pole may be thrust into it with ease, and so hot, that it is impossible to hold one's hand more than an inch or two beneath the surface. In the vicinity of the springs, the bolus has been considerably hardened by the action of the hot water, and appears to be forming into jasper.

After examining a number of boiling springs on the opposite side of the valley, some of which erupt the water with considerable violence; we repaired to the *Ar-hver*, or "River Spring," so called because it is situated in the middle of the river which divides the valley. Here, on the summit of a small rock about eight or ten feet in height, are three orifices full of boiling water, two of which project the water with violence into the air, and send forth such a quantity of steam as nearly to cover the river, though it be of considerable breadth. We endeavoured to measure the depth of the holes, but owing to their irregularity, the plummet could not sink farther than twenty feet. Singular as the situation and appearance of this spring is, the traveller is still more

surprised to observe from a line of steam rising from the surface of the river, that a vein of boiling water forces its way through the very bed into the cold stream; but, indeed, the whole valley seems to be transversed in various directions by subterranean excavations, the water in which is heated by some common conflagration.

On the 27th, after having made the necessary arrangements with the Dean relative to the circulation of the Scriptures, I took leave of the family at *Reykholt*, where I had been treated with distinguished kindness, and prosecuted my journey, accompanied by the Dean and his two eldest sons, from whose society, however, I could profit but little, owing to the violent wind and rain, which continued almost the whole of the day. Passing the mouth of *Lund-Reykiadal*, and fording the *Grimsâ*, a fine salmon river, we had to encounter a rugged mountain-pass, on the other side of which we entered the beautiful valley of *Skorradal*; and, after scrambling through a number of dangerous bogs, reached the margin of a spacious lake, which we found almost surrounded with a fine wood of birch.

The road now lay up a steep pass on the north side of the Eastern *Skardsheidi*, where the mountains wore every appearance of having been terribly convulsed by fire, and brought us, in the course of two hours, into *Svinadal*—a long but narrow valley, abounding in excellent hay, and divided by a long lake, which supplies the inhabitants with plenty of trout.

About six o'clock in the evening we reached the church and parsonage of *Saurbær*, on the northern shore of the *Hvalsfiord*, where we were made cordially welcome by the incumbent, an aged man of seventy-four. To whatever part of this surprising island the traveller may turn, he is sure to meet with some phenomenon or other, either of a physical or moral nature. Here, at a small farm capable only of affording pasture to a few sheep and cattle, and with a stipend of about thirty rix dollars *per annum*, I was not a little astonished to find a man who had read more of his Hebrew Bible than hundreds of the more opulent clergy in Great Bri-

tain. Nor is it less surprising, that he had already gained his sixtieth year ere he entertained any idea of studying the original language of the Old Testament. He was induced to commence this study with the view of satisfying his own mind in regard to the true sense of Scripture, being convinced, that this was the only way in which he could determine whether the translation given in the Icelandic, or that contained in the Danish Bible, was the most consonant to the original. Having, through the kindness of Bishop Vidalin, been provided with a small Hebrew Grammar, the excellent large-lettered edition of the Hebrew Bible by Opitius, and Simonis Hebrew Lexicon, he applied with ardour to his task, and was able in a short time to read the historical books with ease. The psalms next claimed his attention; and he is now able, with the assistance of the lexicon, to resolve even the most intricate parts of the Hebrew text to his own satisfaction and edification. He has also written out beautiful alphabets of the Syriac and Arabic languages, and composed a pretty extensive glossary in Latin, English, French, and German. As he hears with difficulty, it was impossible for me to converse much with him; but he soon took occasion to express his happiness at the supply of Bibles that had been sent to his countrymen, and rejoiced to hear of the progress of true religion in different parts of the world.

Finding that my host had determined to proceed to *Reykiavik* the following day, I did not leave *Saurbæ* so early as I intended, but waited till the afternoon, when, taking an affectionate farewell of the Dean of *Borgarfiord* and his two sons, we set out along the shores of the *Hvalfiord*, or Whale Frith, where I had often occasion to admire the wild grandeur of the mountain scenery; the precipices sometimes rising abruptly, and broken into a thousand curious shapes, sometimes receding with a more gentle acclivity, and presenting a fine exhibition of the numerous rocky beds of which they are composed.

At the termination of the bay, we had to cross a rapid river close to a beautiful cascade, where the water is emptied

into an unfathomable abyss. On the east side of the cascade is a vast excavation in the breccia rock, on the inner wall of which is a number of names that have been written by such as have passed this way.

The road now lay along the face of a precipitous mountain, and was in several places entirely effaced by recent depositions from the impending cliffs. We next proceeded up *Reinavalla-hâls*, a very steep and difficult pass; having reached the summit of which, we came to a singular looking and insulated mountain of tuffa, called *Sandfell*, past the southern base of which ran the *Laxá*, famous for the excellent salmon with which it abounds. Owing to the declivity of the ground, the stream is rather rapid at the fording place; and its passage is rendered still more dangerous by the number of stones which lie concealed at the bottom. It was here that Oddur Gottshalkson, the first translator of the New Testament into Icelandic, lost his life in the year 1556.

The neighbouring parishes of *Reinavellir* and *Medalfell* form the best district of the *Kiosar*, or "Choice" Syssel; and, in addition to the advantages of the salmon-fishery, possess excellent pasture grounds, which are defended on every side by a number of high mountains. Of these, the *Irarfell*, or Irish Mountain, assumes a very peculiar figure, receding to a considerable distance in a direct line, its different horizontal strata retaining at the same time the most perfect regularity of position, till it reaches the grand chain that runs to the east of Mount *Esian*, when a beautiful angle is formed by their junction. These circumstances, combined with the snow-capped summits of the mountains, the noble and rugged precipices which are displayed on their sides, and the numerous cataracts that dash with a deafening roar among the rocks, render the scenery the most romantic imaginable.

I now encountered the last, but at the same time the steepest mountain-pass on my journey. It is very appropriately called *Svig ra-skard*, from the number of turns and windings by which it must be climbed, and is divided by a rapid torrent, which the traveller is every now and then

obliged to pass. About midnight we gained the summit of the ridge, where we must have commanded a very extensive prospect, had it not been for the hazy state of the atmosphere. Descending over the eastern base of *Skálafiall*, we soon reached *Mossfell*, and, pursuing our course without making any halt, we arrived in *Reykiavik* about three o'clock in the morning of the 29th of June, within a single day of the period I had fixed before setting out on my journey.

CHAP. XIV.

Handels-tid, or Period of Traffic—Mode of Travelling to Market—Exports and Imports—History of Icelandic Commerce—Benevolence of the British Government—Order in Council—The interest kept up by the National Assembly—Its Abolition—Formation of the Icelandic Bible Society—Letter from its Secretary—Ditto from Bishop Vidalin—Salmon Fishery.

TOWARDS the end of June the Icelander begins to make the necessary preparations for his journey to the factory, or mercantile establishment, at which he is accustomed to trade. By this time the horses of burden are again fit for use; the sheep have had the woollen fleece torn off their backs;* the roads are passable; and, till the setting in of the hay harvest, no particular branch of rustic labour calls for the presence of the peasants. To accommodate them, factories are established by the Danish merchants at different distances around the coast, whither the majority repair; but as there is seldom more than one mercantile house at each station, many of the Icelanders prefer a journey across the deserts in the interior to *Reykiavik*, where, from the number of houses, there is a kind of competition, and, at all events, they have here the liberty of choice, which, in their estimation, is a matter of no small importance. The prices are generally fixed by the merchants before-hand; yet, in order to obtain a full cargo, they sometimes depart from the rule, and raise the prices towards the end of the market.

It is the duty of the Landfoged and Syssilman to examine

* In Iceland the sheep are not shorn with [illegible] are suffered to go out till the wool begins to fall off, when they are [illegible] from a pen, and it is literally torn off with the hand. By this method [illegible] the wool is lost, and what remains in the fields is very seldom picked [illegible] even by the shepherd.

all the weights and measures in the shops, before the summer traffic commences, and, should any be found defective, the owner is liable to a fine. Both weights and measures are according to the Danish standard.

On setting out for the trading station, the Icelanders load their horses exactly in the manner described at the beginning of this Journal; and such of them as visit the south, generally proceed thither in companies; so that about this time it is no uncommon thing for travellers to meet with caravans consisting of sixty or seventy horses in the deserts of the interior. As they pass along, they amuse themselves by relating the incidents of the preceding winter, or take occasion, from local monuments, to repeat and comment on the stories of ancient times. When they reach the vicinity of *Reykiavik*, they do not proceed instantly with their goods to the market, but encamp on the green spots to the east of the town, where I have more than once fancied myself among "the travelling companies of Dedanim," Isaiah xxi. 13. Sometimes upwards of an hundred tents, and several hundred horses, may be seen here at the same time. Those belonging to the same farm or neighbourhood always pitch their tents close together, and surround them with the baggage to prevent the wind from penetrating below the wadmel which forms the covering of the tent. Their object in not proceeding at once to the market, is to prevent the merchants from gaining an undue advantage over them, by getting possession of their goods before they have had time to ascertain the prices. They therefore leave all to the care of their servants at a sufficient distance, and ride into the town alone, when they go to the different shops, and, after having made the necessary inquiries, agree with the merchant who offers them the best terms, or shews himself the most friendly and obliging in his behaviour. It is to be observed, however, that this custom is chiefly confined to such peasants as come from a distance, and are independent of the merchants: the great majority stand on the debtor side of the shop-books, and are kept in a kind of slavery the whole of their lives. Indeed, it appears to be a fundamental principle of the Ice-

landic trade, to keep up a number of out-standing debts, in order to secure the future commodities of the individuals on whom they are chargeable. Should any of them be detected in dealing with another merchant, he is instantly threatened with prosecution.

The principal exports are fish, salted mutton, oil, tallow, wool, and woollen stuffs, skins, feathers, and sulphur. The chief articles of import, are rye, barley, oat-meal, pease, bread, potatoes, rum, brandy, wine, coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco, salt, wood, iron, flax, lines, hooks, indigo, cotton and silk handkerchiefs, &c. The use of tobacco and coffee, as articles of luxury, has of late increased in a degree very disproportioned to the circumstances of the natives. They seldom smoke tobacco, but are excessively fond of chewing it, and prefer it as a present to any thing that might be offered them.

For some time after the occupation of the island by the Norwegians, the inhabitants carried on their own trade, not only with Norway, to which country, for the sake of family connexions, they often repaired; but also with the British Islands, and different parts of the Continent. Yet even during the earlier periods of the Icelandic Republic, considerable mercantile expeditions were fitted out from Scotland and Ireland; and the merchants of these countries, and those of the Hanseatic towns, were allowed the privilege of a free trade, after the incorporation of the island with Norway. Certain duties were imposed on every foreign vessel that arrived for the purposes of commerce; and, with a view to preserve order and regularity, certain harbours were assigned to the different traders. Towards the close of the fifteenth century, serious disputes arose between the Danish and English courts relative to the Icelandic trade, the consequence of which was, that all English vessels were prohibited from entering the ports of Iceland. The commerce of the island was now monopolized by the Hanseatic merchants, who retained it, almost exclusively, till the year 1602; when, in consequence of the grievous complaints of oppression made by the inhabitants, they were deprived of their

privilege, but still continued to keep up their connexions, in a clandestine manner, till a royal edict of 1616, ordered their ware-houses to be razed, and the wood to be appropriated to the reparation of the poorer churches.*

In 1602, the trade was rented by his Danish Majesty to certain merchants in Copenhagen, Malmö, and Elsinore, for twelve years, on condition of their paying 16 rix-dollars for each harbour. This grant was renewed with some trivial alterations in 1614; and the trade remained in the hands of the company till 1662, when it was rented to four principal agents for the sum of 4000 rix-dollars, for the period of twenty years. At the expiration of this period, different modifications took place with respect to the prices of goods, but these alterations were most frequently to the prejudice of the natives.† In 1706 the trade was rented to separate merchants, for 20,190 rix-dollars annually, from 1706 to 1724; and from that year to 1733, from 20,000 to 20,300 rix-dollars were given for it. The monopoly again fell into the hands of a private company, who for the ten following years paid only 8000 rix-dollars for their privilege; but it was purchased in 1743 for double that sum by a company of flax-merchants, who oppressed the natives to such a degree, that they ultimately forfeited their privilege in the year 1759. From 1759 to 1764, the trade was carried on for the account of the crown, when it was again rented for ten years to the General Merchants' Company, for the sum of 7000 rix-dollars. It now came once more into the hands of the crown, by which it was retained till the year 1788, when, to the no small joy of the Icelanders, it was made free to all the subjects of his Danish Majesty's dominions.‡

Previous to this period, the natives were in a state of absolute slavery to foreign merchants. They were prohibited, under pain of whipping and slavery, from repairing to any other mercantile station than that in the district to which

* Philosophische Schilderung der gegenwärtigen Verfassung von Island, pp. 225, 224, 225. Altona, 1786, 8vo.

† Ibid. pp. 232, 233.

‡ Stephensen's Island i det A[illegible] Vechundrede, pp. 3[illegible]

they belonged; and if they chanced to come there after the ship had completed her cargo, they were obliged to sell their goods for a mere trifle, and consequently were unable to purchase such articles of foreign produce as they wanted for domestic purposes.* It is chiefly to these circumstances that we are to ascribe the comparative want of spirit, inactivity, and poverty, which characterize the present race of Icelanders. Under the iron yoke of oppression, the nobler features of the human mind contract and decay; the spirit of enterprize is damped; and a degree of constitutional apathy and indolence necessarily ensues.

On the breaking out of the war between Great Britain and Denmark in the year 1807, the Icelanders were greatly apprehensive of absolute starvation, from the want of those necessary supplies which they were accustomed to receive from the mother country; and of these the privation of none was more dreaded than that of hooks and fishing-lines, without which they could not avail themselves of the stores of provision which abound in the surrounding ocean. Owing, however, to the humane and benevolent interposition of Sir Joseph Banks, licenses were granted by his Majesty's government, to Danish vessels to proceed to Iceland, under the condition of their touching at the port of Leith, both when outward-bound and on their passage home. By this arrangement the inhabitants were again regularly supplied; and though the act of piracy, committed by a Captain Gilpin in 1808, who robbed the public treasury of at least 30,000 rix-dollars, as well as the usurpation of Jörgensen the following year, necessarily tended to excite fresh alarms in their mind, yet they were soon relieved by an order, issued by the British Cabinet, prohibiting all acts of hostility against Iceland and the rest of the Danish colonies in the Arctic Seas, and taking the inhabitants and their property under the special protection of Great Britain. The following copy of the order, which I have extracted from the London Gazette, deserves to be inserted in this place, as a monument of the

* Stephensen's Island i det Attende Aarhundrede, p. 306.

sympathy felt by his Majesty's Ministers for the destitute and defenceless inhabitants of that remote island:—

"At the COURT at the QUEEN'S PALACE, the 7th February 1810.

PRESENT,

"The KING'S Most Excellent Majesty, in Council.

"Whereas it has been humbly represented to his Majesty, that the islands of Faroe and Iceland, and also certain settlements on the coast of Greenland, parts of the dominions of Denmark, have, since the commencement of the war between Great Britain and Denmark, been deprived of all intercourse with Denmark; and that the inhabitants of those islands and settlements are, in consequence of the want of their accustomed supplies, reduced to extreme misery, being without many of the necessaries, and most of the conveniencies of life:

"His Majesty, being moved by compassion for the sufferings of these defenceless people, has, by and with the advice of his Privy Council, thought fit to declare his royal will and pleasure, and it is hereby declared and ordered, that the said islands of Faroe and Iceland, and the settlements on the coast of Greenland, and the inhabitants thereof, and the property therein, shall be exempted from the attack and hostility of his Majesty's forces and subjects; and that the ships belonging to inhabitants of such islands and settlements, and all goods, being of the growth, produce, and manufacture of the said islands and settlements, on board the ships belonging to such inhabitants engaged in a direct trade between such islands and settlements respectively, and the ports of London or Leith, shall not be liable to seizure and confiscation as prize:

"His Majesty is farther pleased to order, with the advice aforesaid, that the people of all the said islands and settlements be considered, when resident in his Majesty's dominions, as Stranger Friends, under the safeguard of his

Majesty's royal peace, and entitled to the protection of the laws of the realm, and in no case treated as alien enemies.

"His Majesty is further pleased to order, with the advice aforesaid, that the ships of the United Kingdom, navigated according to law, be permitted to repair to the said islands and settlements, and to trade with the inhabitants thereof.

"And his Majesty is further pleased to order, with the advice aforesaid, that all his Majesty's cruisers, and all other his subjects, be inhibited from committing any act of depredation or violence against the persons, ships, and goods of any of the inhabitants of the said islands and settlements, and against any property in the said islands and settlements respectively.

"And the Honourable the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury, his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, and the Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, and the Judges of the Vice-Courts of Admiralty, are to take the necessary measures herein, as to them shall respectively appertain."

(Signed) "W. FAWKENER."

Being thus secured under the protection of Great Britain, the trade was carried on without interruption; and, besides the regular traders from Denmark, several British and American vessels visited Iceland during the war, and two mercantile houses in Liverpool formed proper commercial establishments at *Reykiavik*, where they kept factors for superintending their business. Though some few additional articles of luxury were introduced, yet the natives were on the whole, considerably benefited by the trade with England, as our countrymen undersold the Danish merchants, and imported a greater quantity of potatoes and other useful articles than what they had been in the habit of receiving from the mother country.

In an agreement entered into with the Danish authorities in Iceland, it was stipulated, that for the accommodation of such of the subjects of Great Britain as might have formed

establishments on the island, they should be allowed to carry on this trade till the expiration of one year after an official account of the restoration of peace between the two countries should arrive in Iceland. This accordingly took place in 1815; since which period only one of the Liverpool houses has availed itself of the new regulation issued by the Court of Denmark, which allows British ships to proceed to Iceland, on condition of their procuring a special license for that purpose from Copenhagen. As the sum demanded for such a license is considered to be too high, in proportion to the probable advantages which might result from a commercial enterprize of this nature, it is supposed that all intercourse between Great Britain and Iceland will speedily be brought to a close.

But, to return to the period of traffic. Ever since the abolition of the *Althing*, or National Assembly, in the year 1800, the annual fair at *Reykiavik* presents the only opportunity the natives now enjoy of meeting with one another, or transacting any business of mutual or public concern. But it furnishes only a poor substitute for that interesting occasion. As long as they continued to assemble at *Thingvalla*,* the Icelanders maintained a spirit of liberty and national independence; and though subjected, during the later periods of their history, to the sceptre of a foreign monarch, yet that sceptre has been swayed over them with so much mildness, that it was impossible for them to be conscious of any deterioration in their condition as the result of this change. They delighted to visit a spot where the wisdom and eloquence of their ancestors had long been illustriously displayed; where their admirable constitution had been established, their laws framed, their magistrates elected, and all the various concerns of the nation finally adjusted. The contemplation of the natural scenery too by which they were surrounded, was calculated to revive in their remembrance the characters and events of other days; while, at the same time, they had an opportunity afforded them of conversing together about the occurrences of the preceding

* See p. 59.

winter, and of confirming those habits of friendship and intimacy which had been formed among them. In a word, the period of concourse at *Thingvalla* formed a grand annual festival; and, when it is considered that the sober dispositions of the Icelanders, and the remoteness of the place where they met, proved effectually preventive of the riot and licentiousness which too frequently characterize public meetings in other countries of Europe, it is impossible not to feel indignant at that policy which abolished an institution of such high antiquity, and which furnished so innocent a source of gratification to every uncontaminated Icelandic mind.

How different the scene presented in the streets of *Reykiavik!* There being no inns for their accommodation, and their tents being at some distance, you see the few natives who frequent the place, lounging about the corners of the houses, or visiting one or another of the factors, by whom they are regarded with disdain; and the only attention they receive is for the sake of the gain expected to accrue from their transactions as customers. They feel themselves to be strangers, and dejection and disappointment are marked in every countenance. I never recollect to have mentioned this subject to an Icelander, who did not keenly reprobate the innovation; and their sorrow on account of it is only equalled by the indignation produced by the reflection, that the change was effected by one of their own countrymen.

One of the principal objects of my visit to Iceland, and of the different journies which I undertook through the several districts, was to impress the minds of the natives with a sense of the importance of forming a Bible Society for their own island; the object of which should be to provide its population with a constant supply of the Holy Scriptures in their vernacular language. It gave me pleasure to find, that the proposal met with the cordial approbation of all to whom I communicated it; and they were of opinion, that the period of traffic would be the most convenient time for carrying my purpose into effect. I therefore brought the matter formally before the bishop on my return to *Reykiavik*, when I received the assurances of his patronage; and

the rest of the public authorities, at the same time, promised their countenance and support.

Accordingly, on the 10th of July, at the annual meeting of the Diocesan Synod, which was held in the Cathedral, a sermon was preached on the subject by the Reverend A. Helgason, in which he forcibly set forth the importance and utility of Bible Societies, expatiated with much feeling on the vast operations of the British and Foreign Bible Society in particular, and the plenitude of success with which these operations had been crowned; gave a brief view of its exertions in behalf of Iceland; and concluded by exhorting the Synod to co-operate in this common and glorious cause, and embrace the present opportunity of founding a similar institution for the island of Iceland.

After service, the Synod proceeded to the discussion of their usual business, and, in the afternoon, adjourned to the Episcopal Hall, when the Archdeacon, and the Dean of *Oddc*, were deputed to call at my lodging, and conduct me to the meeting. It was cause of universal regret that the Bishop was not able to be present, having been taken ill the preceding evening. Besides the assistance of the Archdeacon, and the Deans of *Oddc*, *Hvana*, and *Reykhollt*, the meeting was favoured with that of the acting governor, Justiciary Einarson, and Mr Thorsteinson, member of the Court of Exchequer in Copenhagen. The nature and object of Bible Societies having been distinctly stated, and the promise of pecuniary aid from the British and Foreign Bible Society having been given to the meeting, it was unanimously resolved that a Society should be formed; but, on deliberation, it appeared most eligible, in consideration of the absence of many of the natives, whose approbation and support were considered to be absolutely necessary to the success of the plan, that the meeting should only lay the foundation of the Society, and postpone its full organization till next meeting of Synod; and that an invitation to all the inhabitants of Iceland, to come forward in aid of the institution, should be drawn up and signed by the principal civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and circulated, before the

winter set in, throughout the island. The following is the translation of a copy of the minutes taken on the occasion:

"On the 10th of July 1815, a meeting was held at *Reykiavik* by the undersigned, for the purpose of establishing a Bible Society for this island, on the same principles with similar institutions in different parts of the world: when it was resolved, that such a Society be formed, having for its grand object, to provide against any future want of Bibles in the vernacular language, and to promote their circulation throughout the country, according as circumstances may require. But, owing to the absence of several of the principal persons on the island, it was judged necessary to postpone the establishment of the laws of the Society till the 9th of July 1816; and the members then associated authorised the Right Reverend G. Vidalin, the Very Reverend the Archdeacon M. Magnusson, the Reverend Arna Helgason, Rector of the Cathedral, Isl. Einarson, Justiciary and Assessor of the High Court, B. Thorarinson, Assessor of the High Court, and S. Thorgrimson, Royal Treasurer, to invite the leading people on the island to a meeting on the above-mentioned day, for the purpose of fixing the constitution of the Society, and determining other matters connected with its operations.

"In the meantime, the members of the Society then present, pledged themselves to contribute annually to the funds of the Society as follows:

	Rix-Bank Dollars.
Geir Vidalin, Bishop of Iceland, *Reykiavik*,	20 Silver Value.
M. Magnusson, Archdeacon, *Gardè*,	6 ———
A. Helgason, Rector of the Cathedral,	3 ———
Isl. Einarson, Justiciary, *Breda*,	5 ———
S. Thorgrimson, Treasurer, *Reykiavik*,	10 ———
Steingrimur Jonson, Dean, *Oddè*,	4 ———
T. Jonson, Dean, *Hruna*,	4 Nom. Value.
Eggert, Dean, *Reykholt*,	3 Silver Value.
B. Thorarinson, Assessor,	3 ———
Jon Jonson, Lector, *Lambhus*,	4 ———
B. Sivertson, Rector of *Holt*,	2 ———

	Rix-Bank Dollars.
J. Jonson, Rector of *Klaustrholum*, - -	3 Nom. Value.
Gestr Thorlakson, Rector of *Mosm*, -	1 ————
Helgi Biarnason, Rector of *Meynavoln*, -	2 ————
Ingemundr Gunnarson, Rector of *Kalldadaness*,	3 ————
F. Thorarinson, Rector of *Breidabolstad*, -	2 Silver Value.
H. Jonson, Rector of *Gardè* on *Akkraness*,	2 ————
Magnus Arnason, Rector of *Thingeyra Cloister*,	2 ————
Guttormr Paulson, Rector of *Holmum*, -	3 ————

"The Royal Treasurer, Mr Thorgrimson, was chosen by the meeting to receive these sums, (to be paid before the term of Michaelmas next,) and to keep the same till required by the Society."

Thus, in the good providence of God, the preliminary steps were taken for the establishment of an institution, which, by his blessing, may be instrumental in perpetuating the treasures of Revelation to numerous Icelandic generations yet unborn. The young tree is planted, indeed, in rather an unpromising soil, and must be exposed to the vicissitudes of an unstable and refractory climate: yet, fostered by the care, and watered with the dews of Heaven, it will grow and prosper, till its branches extend to every corner of the island, that all the inhabitants may stretch forth their hand, and take of its fruit, and eat, and live for ever! Much, however, will depend upon the liberality and assistance of similar, but more affluent institutions; and next to the friendly aid of the Danish Bible Society, with which, by various civil ties, the members of the Icelandic establishment must necessarily consider themselves more closely connected, their expectations will be turned to the British and Foreign Bible Society, whose bounty the inhabitants of Iceland have already reaped in so eminent a degree.

On information being received by the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, of the formation of the Bible Society in Iceland, the sum of £300 Sterling was voted by that body, to aid the funds of this infant institution; and the following is a letter of thanks from its Secre-

tary, addressed to the Committee of the Parent Society in London:—

"*Reykiavik, March* 2, 1817.

"We gratefully adore the kind providence of God, who, in withholding from us some portion of earthly good, has yet, with a bountiful hand, dispensed to us his blessings. Among these we acknowledge, as by far the most excellent, the gift of his divine religion, which enables us, at once, to supply the want of temporal comforts, and to provide for our eternal welfare. And you, our kind helpers, who, by your example and benefactions, have caused the streams of life to flow among us, not only more freely than heretofore, but with a perpetual current, we regard, on this account, as the delegates of Divine Providence, and shall highly esteem you as long as the Divine Word is in honour among us; as long as the eternal welfare of our souls is dear to us.

"You have sent to us the treasures of our divine religion. The Rev. Ebenezer Henderson, who came among us, authorised by you, has largely distributed these excellent gifts of your bounty. He has, moreover, induced us to consult our own welfare more diligently than in time past in this important respect, by establishing a Bible Society in our own island.

"On our part, we gladly obeyed the suggestion, fearing only that our circumstances may not prove equal to this pious undertaking; but here again you come to our aid, tendering, in a letter to our President, Bishop Vidalin, the large sum of £300, for the supply of our spiritual need. Words are wanting to express our gratitude for this act of munificence, whether we consider the greatness of the gift, the pious intention which dictated it, or the end which it is destined to serve.

"Indeed we are unable to thank you as we ought; and can only entreat the bounteous Giver of all good to bestow upon you a recompense worthy of your piety. May He graciously prosper your excellent intentions, and so aid us in our design, that you may never have cause to regret your

liberality! May the knowledge and obedience of his divine religion daily increase, and be confirmed among us, by which we may approve ourselves more and more to you our benefactors! This prayer, the pious effusion of our hearts, will be heard, we trust, on high!

"It is due to you, to whose aid and example we are indebted for the whole, that we inform you of what has hitherto been done among us; and, in the first place, (as we are persuaded nothing will rejoice your hearts more than the success of your own labours,) we may inform you, that we have framed our rules, and appointed officers for the management of our business, on the model of your august Society. We have elected for President, our Bishop, the Right Rev. Geir Vidalin; for Vice-President, Isl. Einarson, Counsellor of Justice; our Treasurer is S. Thorgrimson, Receiver-General of the island; and our Secretary, Pastor A. Helgason. The chief person in each district, assisted by the clergy under him, has the care of our affairs within his province.

"We have given a general invitation, by circular letters, to all the inhabitants of our island to join in this momentous work; and we heartily rejoice, and are sure you will rejoice with us, in the good disposition which is every where manifested; insomuch, that not only poor fathers of families, but even male and female servants, come forward with their little contributions. We cannot as yet say what is the amount subscribed; the extent of our island, the almost impassable state of the roads, and, above all, the inclemency of the climate in the winter season, obstructing the means of conveyance. We trust, however, through Divine assistance, that even among us, there will appear, in due season, some fruit of your labours; that even in this world, you will be blessed with this recompense, in part of your piety, while the fulness of reward is reserved for you in eternal life.

"Farewell, our benefacters; we pray most fervently to Almighty God to bless you."

"Subscribed, by order of the Bible Society in Iceland, by

"A. Helgason."

A letter was at the same time received from the Right Reverend President, which, as it contains his own individual testimony to the utility of the institution, I shall insert at this place.

"*Reykiavik, Sept.* 4, 1817.

"I have received, most worthy Sir, with the greatest joy, the letter you have sent me, together with a Report, which gives an account of the flourishing state and wonderful progress of your Bible Society; for which I most earnestly request you to return, in my name, the fullest thanks to that excellent institution.

"The most high and gracious God grant that it may continue daily to bring forth abundant and delightful fruits, which are none other than the knowledge of the divine word, and of the duties it enjoins us, as well as the advancement of the happiness of the human race, which depends thereon.

"The present state of our Bible Society, which is formed after the model of yours, has been lately communicated to you, in a letter from the Secretary, the Rev. Mr Helgason, to which I hesitate not to refer you.

"Farewell, ye benefactors of the human race, on whom our heavenly Father will confer, in his own time, a reward commensurate with your exertions.

"Farewell also, most worthy Sir; and favour our Society, which delights to rank itself among your offspring, with the continuance of your condescending regard and patronage.

(Signed) Geir Vidalin,

"*President of the Bible Society in Iceland.*"

As the inhabitants of Iceland are not in any immediate want of a new edition of the Holy Scriptures, though, from the constant use they are making of the copies which they have recently received, there is every reason to believe it will not be long ere it will be called for, the attention of the Committee of the Icelandic Bible Society is, in the first instance, directed to a proper revisal of their present translation, which is universally allowed to labour under very con-

siderable imperfections. The Bishop has already prepared some of the Gospels; the revision of the Acts has been undertaken by Justiciary Einarson; and several of the Epistles are in a state of forwardness by Steingrim Jonson, Guttorm Paulson, and other individuals distinguished for a critical knowledge of the original.

It must certainly prove in a high degree gratifying to all the friends of the Bible Society to learn, that to no quarter of the globe could their exertions have been directed with a greater probability of success than to Iceland, as the inhabitants of that remote island were evidently prepared by the Spirit of God for the reception of his blessed word; and to no instance within the vast compass of the Society's operations can the observation of the Apostle with more justice be applied: "The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God, while, by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. ix. 12—15.

The only other incident worthy of notice, as happening about this time, is the taking of the salmon in the *Hellarâ*, or Salmon River, a few miles to the east of *Reykiavik*. Having been apprised that the quantity of salmon caught at this place is sometimes immense, I accompanied my friend Mr Hodgson to the spot. As we rode along, we overtook numbers of Danes and Icelanders of both sexes, and many of them accompanied by their children, all repairing to the river; on our arrival at which, we found a great concourse assembled to witness the sport, or assist in taking the fish. The *Hellarâ*, as its name imports, is very cavernous: a stream of lava having been poured down the gulley through

which it runs; and in these caverns the salmon find admirable strongholds in which to secure themselves against their pursuers. Before the proper season they are only partially caught by means of large wooden boxes placed in front of the small water-falls; but, on this occasion, one of the branches of the river, which divides into two arms a little above this spot, is dammed up, and the whole quantity of water is diverted into the other channel some hours before the catch begins. The other branch, which contains the salmon, is then drained as much as possible, by some stones being taken out of the barrier by which it had been dammed up.

On a signal being given by the proprietor, a number of men rushed into the water that remained, with a large net, and coming directly down upon the salmon, caught a great quantity at the first draught. This operation was repeated till all the salmon were taken. The whole number taken in the course of five hours amounted to upwards of nineteen hundred. Sometimes nearly three thousand are taken in this way in a single forenoon. The greater number of those caught on this occasion were small, but some of them weighed twenty-five pounds. In the river *Hvitâ* in *Borgarfiord*, salmon are sometimes taken which weigh forty pounds. That river, and many others in Iceland, which abound in this excellent fish, are divided among the neighbouring peasants; but the *Hellará* belongs to his Danish Majesty, and is at present rented by Mr Scheele, one of the Danish residents in *Reykiavik*.

CHAP. XV.

Almannagiâ—Armannsfell—Skialldbreid Volcano—Kaldidal—Husafell—Sagacity of the Mouse—Gilsbacka—The remarkable Cavern of Surtshellir described—Arnarvatn—Desert—Bewildered in a Fog—Hot Springs of Hveravellir described—Blöndudal—The Rustic Astronomer—Factory of Skagastrand.

It being still necessary for me to visit some of the clergy, and others in the north of Iceland, I set out once more from *Reykiavik*, on Tuesday the 18th of July, in company with Messrs Thomson and Brorson, two gentlemen from *Holstein*, who intended to explore some remarkable spots in the interior. The first day's journey lay across the same lonely tract I passed last year, till we arrived at the western shore of the *Thingvallavatn*, when we turned into the *Almannagiâ*, and pitched our tents in the middle of the fissure, a little to the north of the site of the booth in which Snorro Goda lived during his stay at the Althing. It lies on the north side of the small opening that leads out of the fissure, and commands a fine view of the fissure itself, the river *Oxarâ*, the *Lögberg*, and the church and parsonage of *Thingvalla*.

Next morning we left *Thingvalla*, from which we had been richly supplied with trout and cream, and proceeded in a northerly direction across the lava, which everywhere exhibited tremendous parallel rents, and prevented us from advancing with that celerity we could have wished. At the termination of the *Almannagiâ*, we arrived at the base of *Armannsfell*, a huge mountain of tuffa, which has also been rent from its foundations at the period of the sinking of the

valley, and consists for the most part of the wildest precipices, which overhang the road in rather an alarming manner. Having skirted for some time the immense stream of lava that has been poured down in this direction from Mount *Skialldbreid*, we came to the beautiful plain of *Hofmannafliot*, which is covered with rich grass, and where the original occupiers of the tract are said to have held their feats of athletic prowess amid hundreds of spectators.

We had now to climb a very steep and narrow pass, having a conical mountain of small basaltic lava on our right, and several irregular tuffa hills on the left; and after descending into an extensive sandy plain, in which lay a large lake of white water, we came to the western margin of the lava, on the opposite side of which rose the volcano *Skialldbreid*, or "Broad Shield," so called from its striking resemblance to that ancient weapon of defence. It may be about 3000 feet of perpendicular height, yet rises with so gradual an ascent, that, were it not for its lavas, a carriage might proceed up its surface with the utmost ease. Its base describes a circle of at least thirty miles. The crater, at its summit, is distinctly visible; and all around its sides, and across the surrounding plains, nothing is visible but the lava which it has poured forth in every direction.

Passing to the west of the volcano, we arrived about three in the afternoon at a small grassy spot, where we were in expectation of getting something for our horses; but the caravans that had recently passed this way had eaten it completely bare: however, as we had a long stony desert before us, it was necessary to unload the horses for a few hours at this place. At six o'clock we recommenced our journey, pursuing the road, called *Kaldidals-vegur*, which at first we found pretty good, owing to a little soil that has gathered in the course of time among the ancient lavas, but it soon began to deteriorate, and at last got so stony, that we were obliged to walk at a slow pace. The *Kaldidal* itself we found perfectly to answer to its name.* On every hand we were surrounded by mountains of perpetual snow and ice;

* The Cold Dale.

the road lay at times across immense heaps of snow, and not a patch of vegetation was perceptible in any direction. Had it not been for the fineness of the weather, the ride must have been absolutely intolerable.

Advancing to the right of the ancient volcano, but now an ice-mountain, called *Ok*, we came in contact with the *Geitland's Yökul*, or the south-west division of the long chain of snow and ice mountains described in the former part of the journal, when we had an opportunity of admiring some of the beautiful glaciers, which flow down from its upper regions into the subjacent plains. Near its termination, the Yökul embraces the base of a whitish mountain, resembling the mountain of *Dràpuhlid*, and most probably of the same formation. About three o'clock in the morning we arrived at the banks of the *Geitlandsâ*, whose waters are of a whitish muddy colour, and give the name to the noble *Hvitâ*, which flows with such majesty through the Syssel of *Borgarfiord*. After skirting its southern margin for the space of an hour, during which time we crossed an ancient stream of lava, partially covered with birch, we came to a good-looking farm, called *Husafell*, beside which we pitched our tents, and instantly retired to rest. The distance from *Thingvalla* to this place is upwards of forty miles.

There is nothing about *Husafell* deserving of notice except its mouse, the history of which has rendered it more famous than other parts of the island where the same zoological phenomenon has presented itself. This animal, which is supposed by Olafsen and Povelsen to be a variation of the wood, or economical mouse, displays a surprising degree of sagacity, both in conveying home its provisions, and the manner in which it stocks them in the magazine appropriated for that purpose. In a country, says Mr Pennant,* where berries are but thinly dispersed, these little animals are obliged to cross rivers to make their distant forages. In their return with the booty to their magazines, they are obliged to repass the stream; of which Mr Olafsen (Olafsen and Povelsen) gives the following account: "The party, which

* Introd. to Arctic Zoology, p. lx.

consists of from six to ten, select a flat piece of dried cow-dung, on which they place the berries on a heap in the middle; then, by their united force, bring it to the water's edge, and, after launching it, embark, and place themselves round the heap, with their heads joined over it, and their backs to the water, their tails pendent in the stream, serving the purpose of rudders." Mr Hooker * ridicules the idea of any such process, and tells us, that every sensible Icelander laughs at the account as fabulous; but the individuals he alludes to must have been possessed of an equal degree of incredulity with himself; and every considerate naturalist will rather be disposed, with our celebrated zoologist, † to reason analogically from the well-known sagacity of the beaver and squirrel, than deny the probability of the case.

Having been apprised of the doubts that were entertained on this subject, before setting out on my second excursion, I made a point of inquiring at different individuals as to the reality of the account, and I am happy in being able to say, that it is now established as an important fact in natural history, by the testimony of two eye-witnesses of unquestionable veracity, the clergyman of *Briâmslæk*, and Madame Benedictson of *Stickesholm*; both of whom assured me that they had seen the expedition performed repeatedly. Madame B. in particular, recollected having spent a whole afternoon, in her younger days, at the margin of a small lake on which these skilful navigators had embarked, and amused herself and her companions by driving them away from the sides of the lake as they approached them. I was also informed that they make use of dried mushrooms as sacks, in which they convey their provisions to the river, and thence to their homes. Nor is the structure of their nests less remarkable. From the surface of the ground a long passage runs into the earth, similar to that of the Icelandic houses, and terminates in a large and deep hole, intended to receive any water that may find its way through the passage, and serving at the same time as a place for their dung. About two-thirds of the passage in, two di-

* Tour in Iceland. † Mr Pennant.

agonal roads lead to their sleeping apartment and the magazine, which they always contrive to keep free from wet.

About three o'clock in the afternoon of the 20th, we again struck our tents; but previous to our setting off, we stepped up to the farm, in order to pay for the milk we had drunk, when we received the following pious and uncommon answer from the mistress: "No, I will not take any thing for it; for we receive it from God for nothing."

Allowing our baggage to proceed into the desert, we struck off in a westerly direction to *Gilsbacka*, where I had some business to transact with the clergyman, Sira Hiortr Jonson. The lava in front of *Husafell* we found so rugged and uneven, that it was with the utmost difficulty we could get our horses across it; but what rendered it peculiarly dangerous was, that the rents and chasms were, for the most part, covered with willows, the branches of which had grown together, so as to hide the fissures from our view, though many of them were only a few inches from the track. After crossing the *Geitlandsa* and *Nordlingafliot*, a little above their confluence, when the joint stream assumes the name of the *Hvitâ*, we encountered another stream of lava, called, from its colour, the Grey Lava, (*Gra Hraun*,) which we found, if possible, still more cavernous and distorted. On our arrival at *Gilsbacka*, we were kindly received by Mr Jonson and his wife, and provided with the usual refreshments. The church, houses, and farm are in good order, and form altogether a very agreeable place of residence.

We again left *Gilsbacka* a little before midnight, accompanied by the clergyman, and pursued our course in an easterly direction, occasionally skirting the Grey Lava, and crossing its projecting arms; till, passing the two last farms, we recrossed the *Nordlingafliot*, and entered the extensive desert known by the name of *Arnarvatnsheidi*. About two o'clock we overtook our men, at a small green spot called *Hellisfitiar*, just as they were about to unload the horses, and proceeded, without delay, to pitch our tents, which, with much difficulty, we effected on a dome of lava!

Having slept a few hours at this place, we set out on foot

to explore the remarkable cavern of *Surtshellir*, which lay at the distance of a quarter of a mile due east from the site of our tents. The whole tract presented nothing to the view but the most irregular lava imaginable, now lying in compact and level masses, and now distorted and broken in a thousand pieces. The fiery torrent has evidently originated in *Bald Yökul*, and after flowing past the long projecting point of *Eiriksgnypa*, it has spread to the extent of more than four miles, deranged the course of the *Nordlingafliot*, filled every corner of the valley, and risen to a considerable height on the sides of the adjoining mountains.

A small path made by those whose curiosity prompts them to visit the cavern, directed us to the spot, where we found a *varde*, or heap of stones, on an elevated part of the lava, serving the purpose of a mark. On our arrival at this place, we descended into a large chasm, which has been formed by the falling in of the crust of lava; and direct before us, towards the south, yawned the gloomy abode of darkness, measuring about 40 feet in height, by 50 in breadth; which dimensions it retains for more than two-thirds of its length, which has been ascertained by admeasurement to be 5034 feet. All round the entrance were large heaps of stones which have fallen down from the roof; scrambling over which we came to a large heap of congealed snow, and descended to the margin of a long pool of water, the bottom of which consisted of ice; but as the water was excessively cold, and would have taken us past the middle, we returned in the hopes of being able to discover a more convenient aperture. We had only proceeded a short way across the lava, when we came to another vast chasm, formed in like manner by the falling in of the roof; but as the walls were nearly 30 feet of perpendicular height, and we had no ropes with us, we saw no possibility of descending, and therefore advanced still further in search of a third. After spending an hour in fruitless pursuit, we retraced our steps to the second opening, when one of our party, more adventurous than the rest, succeeded in getting down, and was followed by all of us, except the clergyman, who,

being rather corpulent, durst not make the attempt. However, as he was equally desirous of seeing the curiosities of the cavern, he returned to the first aperture, and resolved to ford the deep water, notwithstanding his being the shortest of any of us. Solicitous, if possible, to save him this trouble, we entered that part of the cave from the inner end, and fortunately discovered a crust of lava running longitudinally along the right-hand side, which was just broad enough for our friend to walk upon, while he suspended himself in a great measure, by the knobby and stalactitic lavas above.

One of our servants, who had followed us to the spot, could not on any account be prevailed on to accompany us into the cavern. His mind was evidently tinctured with the same superstition to which the cavern owes its name. It formed one article of the ancient Scandinavian creed, that at the close of the present system of things, *Surtur*, the black prince of the regions of fire, should proceed from the south, and set the world on flames; * and the original inhabitants of Iceland having fallen in with this cavern, and contemplated the awful marks of conflagration with which it is surrounded, have conceived the idea that a more proper abode could not be assigned to the genius of fire.

We now lighted our torches, and entered the cavern, which was also filled, at this place, to a considerable height with snow; beyond which we fell in with a rugged tract of large angular pieces of lava that had fallen from the vault, so that we were in constant danger of cutting ourselves, or falling into the holes of water that lay between them. Nor were we without apprehensions lest fresh masses should have dislodged themselves from the roof, and crushed us to atoms.

The darkness here became so great, that with all the light afforded us by two large torches, we were still prevented from surveying so distinctly as we could have wished, the beautiful black volcanic stalactites with which the high and spacious vault was hung, or the sides of the cave, run into

* See the Voluspâ and the Dæmisaga, concerning Ragnaröckr in Snorro's Edda.

vitrified horizontal stripes, that appear to have been formed by the flowing of the stream of melted stones, while its exterior parts have been cooled by their exposure to the atmosphere. After contemplating these curious productions of nature, and just as we were on the point of prosecuting our subterraneous journey, we discovered a large excavation situated at some height on our right, which, with some difficulty, we reached and entered; but, after advancing about eighty feet, the roof got so low, that we could no longer walk with any degree of ease, so that we returned, and entering a still smaller subdivision, arrived again by an easy route at the main cavern.

Almost exactly facing us, on the opposite side, we descried the entrance to two other subterraneous passages of an immense size, which we instantly recognized as the asylum to which numerous banditti resorted in former times, and of which mention is made in the ancient historical monuments of the island.* Descending into the cavern, we began to scale the rampart, which is about ten feet of perpendicular height from the bottom of the cave, and succeeded in entering the excavation behind it; but we had not proceeded many steps, when we were arrested by a long stone wall, about three feet high, visibly made by the hand of man. It had a small door or entrance about the middle, through which we passed, after having surveyed a large circular heap of decayed bones, mostly of sheep and oxen, but also some of horses, which the robbers had killed for their subsistence. Within the inclosure was a room or apartment, about thirty feet in length, by fifteen in breadth, the floor of which was strewed with the finest volcanic sand, and is supposed to have supplied the place of beds. From this we penetrated about forty yards; but finding that our farther progress must have been purchased by wading in cold water past the knees, we returned to the entrance. The whole length of this cave is about three hundred feet; its height at the entrance, and a considerable way in, is about eighteen feet; and its breadth twenty-four. The vault is hung with

* See Sturlunga, book . . . p. 46.

still more beautiful stalactites than that of the main cavern, and as they are more strongly vitrified, they reflect the light in a very splendid manner.

Having seen all that appeared worthy of observation here, we again descended from the rampart, and pursued our course into the profound chasm, which still opened in darkness before us. We were again incommoded by heaps of stones, many of which appeared to be of recent deposition; but after having surmounted this difficulty, a still more formidable obstacle presented itself—a long tract of water, through which it was absolutely necessary for us to wade, if we would gain the inner end of the cave. It took us up to the knees, and at first seemed rather alarming, as we apprehended deep holes, into which we might precipitate ourselves ere we were aware; but we soon found that the bottom was perfectly sound, consisting of smooth ice of amazing thickness, over which we advanced with uncommon velocity. The only thing of a disagreeable nature was the coldness of the water. Towards the termination of the ice, a large fragment of lava now and then obstructed our passage, and obliged us to seek an oblique road; and in the course of a quarter of an hour from our leaving the rampart, we arrived at a third opening in the roof, the light admitted through which we could discover at a great distance. The cave opens at this aperture into two divisions, which are separated from each other by a narrow partition of lava; and at the opposite end of the aperture, which is nearly half full of stones, two large holes present themselves; but that to the left does not run farther than twenty feet, whereas the other is the continuation of the grand cavern. We had no sooner left the light of day than we came to another pool of water, through which we had to wade, but found it less deep than the two former ones, taking us only mid-leg. Exchanging this for a rough stony tract, which gave place to a fine floor of even lava, and after we had walked a long way without meeting any interruption, we could once more discover a small glimmering of light descending through the last window or aperture in the roof of the cave. This open-

ing we found much smaller than any of the preceding; and what afforded us no small joy, was the discovery that the surface of the ground was attainable without the least difficulty by its northern side, as by this means we might save ourselves the trouble of returning by the mouth of the cave.

We now entered the aperture at the opposite end, and almost instantaneously found ourselves enveloped in thicker darkness than ever, but met with neither water nor stones. The floor was covered with a thick coating of ice, and dipped so rapidly, that, finding it impossible to keep our feet, we sat down, and slid forward by our own weight. On holding the torches close to the ice, we could discover its thickness to seven or eight feet, clear as crystal. It was not long till we reached a spot, the grandeur of which amply rewarded all our toil; and would have done so, though we had travelled an hundred times the distance to see it. The roof and sides of the cave were decorated with the most superb icicles, crystallized in every possible form, many of which rivalled in minuteness the finest zeolites; while, from the icy floor, rose pillars of the same substance, assuming all the curious and fantastic shapes imaginable, mocking the proudest specimens of art, and counterfeiting many well-known objects of animated nature. Many of them were upwards of four feet high, generally sharpened at the extremity, and about two feet in thickness. A more brilliant scene perhaps never presented itself to the human eye, nor was it easy for us to divest ourselves of the idea, that we actually beheld one of the fairy scenes depicted in eastern fable. The light of the torches rendered it peculiarly enchanting.

Quitting this exquisite spot, we passed along the side of a double layer of ice, which was quite smooth; but being exceedingly sharp at the edge, we were frequently in danger of cutting ourselves upon it. We next encountered a miry part of the cavern, which was more solid, however, than we at first expected and as it was even, and gradually sloped downwards, we advanced with considerable speed,

till, all at once, we discovered the pyramid of lava mentioned by Olafsen and Povelsen,* on which we still found one of the two silver coins deposited here by these gentlemen in the year 1753. As it was the Danish ten skilling piece that was amissing, and not the half-crown, it was clear it had not been stolen, but had fallen down among the stones of which the pyramid is composed. On the upper side of the half-crown, which we found lying on the surface of a flat piece of lava, serving as a pedestal for the top-stone of the pyramid, was a signature in red wax, representing two dogs attacking a hedge-hog, with the superscription INDARNO, in capital letters. The solitary letter at the foot was somewhat effaced, so that we could not discern whether it was a *B* or an *E*; but, in either case, it was the initial of one of the Christian names of the travellers above-mentioned. The impressions in wax on the stone itself were so defaced as to be illegible. Having impressed our signatures in like manner with wax on two Danish rixorts, and two six-skilling pieces, we deposited them beside the half-crown, and repaired such parts of the monument as had fallen down. At the foot of the pyramid lay still part of the piece of birch wood mentioned by Olafsen and Povelsen. It was quite humid, yet did not appear to have undergone any material alteration since their time, for it still required a little pressure to crumble it to dust.

A considerable way without the pyramid the cavern begins to contract; and after walking about 400 feet further, we came to the inner end, where the marks of two subdivisions appeared, but they were entirely filled up with large pieces of lava, part of which has fallen from the roof, and the rest seems to be the lava in its original bed, but cracked and disjointed by its exposure to the atmosphere.

As we had now fully gratified our curiosity, we returned to the last aperture in the vault, through which we again reached the surface of the earth, after having spent upwards of four hours under ground; but found ourselves almost suffocated with heat, on so sudden a transition from the cold

* Reise igiennem Island. p. 251.

and dark cavern to open day, where the rays of the sun were very strongly reflected from the vitrified lava and volcanic sand around us. It was almost the same as if we had suddenly exchanged a Greenland winter for an African summer. On looking across the lava, in the direction of the cave, it was evident, that it stretched to the base of an adjoining mountain, called *Strutur*, where the lava, having been prevented from advancing, has been dammed up and cooled, while the fresh currents from the volcano have pursued their course down the valley to the river *Hvitâ*.

On the morning of the 22d, we pursued our journey into the desert. The road lay at first across the western border of the stream of lava; leaving which, we entered an extensive tract of the same substance, the deposition of which is in all probability coeval with the island itself; and, as the ground continued gradually to ascend, and the atmosphere was perfectly clear, we ultimately obtained a very commanding prospect of the western parts of Iceland. One of the principal inconveniences to which travellers are exposed in passing through the deserts, is the want of water. As the day was hot, our bottles soon got exhausted; and we were obliged to travel several hours before we again fell in with a stream. About two o'clock we reached the large lake *Arnarvatn*, from which the desert derives its name. It branches out into a great many arms, which extend in every direction, so that there is no part of the surrounding country from which the whole lake may be seen at one view. Near its eastern extremity we were shewn a small house, which is annually repaired by those who come hither from the south country to fish on the lake, and is said to have been originally built by the famous champion Grettir, on which account it still bears the name of *Grettis-skauli*.

At the termination of the desert of *Arnarvatnsheidi*, we came to the "Twelve Wards," or pillars, where the huge waste, known by the name of *Stori Sandur*, begins, which is supposed to be the highest mountain-road of any on the island. According to an observation made with the barometer in 1792, it was found to be about 2212 feet above the

level of the sea. * As it was the object of my companions, in pursuing this route, to visit the remarkable hot springs of *Hveravellir*, which, according to the maps, lay only a little to the right, I resolved to proceed with them in that direction. Deceived partly by the maps, and partly by what we conceived to be columns of steam, we struck off from the road, and entered a region that had in all probability never been trod before by the foot of man. We had not advanced far, when we almost began to repent of our having taken this route, as nothing appeared, as far as the eye could reach, but a desert of sand and stones, or Alpine mountains of ever-during snow. We literally entered "a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt," Jer. ii. 6.

Our men, who had all along been averse to the expedition, now began to be loud in their complaints, and depicted to us, in very pathetic language, the inevitable starvation of our horses, and the risk we should run of losing our lives by the hands of robbers, with whom they apprehended some part of this remote desert might be infested. Foreigners in general ridicule the idea of there being any people of this description in the interior, and my own favourable ideas of the character of the Icelanders prevented me from entertaining any fears on the subject; but the Chief-Justice has since told me, he certainly would not have ventured to travel through many parts that I did without pistols; and the merchants have sometimes traded with people, who, both from their appearance, and the nature of their traffic, excited strong suspicions of their being inhabitants of the desert.

About seven o'clock in the evening, we descried some beautiful green plains at the base of the ice mountains. However, the discovery created as much alarm in the minds of our servants as it afforded joy to us; for they were now sure that we would fall in with robbers, and it was not long ere they pointed out to us a number of horses feeding close to

* Mr Paulsen's MS. ut sup. § 17.

the Yökul, which at first rather shook our confidence, and inclined us to listen with some degree of attention to the proposed method of defence; but a single glance through a spy glass converted the horses into large stones, that had been thrown down from some neighbouring volcano; and we hastened forward to the plains, to which we gave the name of *Yökuls-vellir*, and encamped in front of a small eminence, richly covered with willows, angelica, and a great variety of other botanical productions, on which our horses feasted with great avidity.

The following morning we renewed our lonesome journey, and proceeded in nearly an easterly direction towards the northern termination of the Yökul: but, after ascending a very hilly tract, and just as we approached the base of the ice, we were forced, by some deep, but dry, channels, to strike off to the left, when we almost instantly found ourselves surrounded by a number of small hills, the conical form of which bespoke their volcanic origin, though they appeared to be much older than a stream of lava which runs down from the Yökul on the right, but soon stops, presenting, at its termination, a nearly perpendicular wall of more than forty feet in height. We had scarcely begun to make our observations on the geologic phenomena around us, when, to our no small concern, we got enveloped in mist, which closed thicker and thicker on every side, till at last we could scarcely see the last horse in our train. We now depended on the compass, but, on taking it out of our luggage-chest, we were astonished to find it refuse to lend us any assistance. It kept shaking and dipping towards the face, and appeared to be more strongly attracted downwards than to any of the points; so great must have been the predominance of irony matter among the volcanic substances in the vicinity. We had no alternative left, but to follow, as well as we could, the direction we had originally pursued, and passed over immense masses of ice, in which we discovered numerous chasms of invisible depth.

After winding round the base of several hills that were partially covered with snow, and traversing wide gulleys whose surface was covered with comminuted lava, we fell in with a

very ancient and extensive torrent of lava, that appeared to have its origin in some part of the northern extremity of the *Yökul*. Proceeding up a gulley between the lava, and a snow-mountain to our right, we entertained some hopes of extricating ourselves by this route; but being suddenly favoured with a temporary dispersion of the mist, we had the mortification to find that all further progress was obstructed by an immense Alpine barrier which presented itself directly before us. Retracing our steps, we at last resolved to cross the lava, which we found in a state of great decomposition, and, after scrambling over it for some hours, without any further prospect of success, it appeared most advisable to follow its course, as by this means we might be conducted again into the low country. During our progress we observed several curious volcanic chimnies, but the critical nature of our situation had damped all desire of examining them. Following the rapid descent of the lava, we had the inexpressible satisfaction, about seven o'clock in the evening, of seeing the mist disperse, and an almost unbounded view presented itself across the desert plains in the interior. We now made all haste to leave these inhospitable mountain regions; and, about ten o'clock, we encamped on the banks of a small river, the name of which (*Thegiandisâ*, the Quiet River,) called to my recollection the words of the Psalmist: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside *the still waters*." Psalm xxiii. 2.

On the 24th we proceeded along the base of the low mountains on the east side of *Bald Yökul*, and arrived about noon at *Hveravellir*, or "the Plains of the Hot Springs," one of the most interesting spots in Iceland. They are situated at the northern termination of the extensive tract of lava called the *Kial-hraun*, about half way between the snow-mountains, and the two insulated mountains of *Dufufell* and *Grufufell*. On approaching the place, it was not without sensations of awe that we beheld the columns of smoke that were issuing from almost innumerable apertures in the surface of the ground, and heard the thundering noise attending its escape. Pitching our tents in a small but fertile gulley close to the

principal springs, we devoted the remainder of the day to the contemplation of the remarkable phenomena around us.

The tract, which slopes rapidly towards the east, has been originally a morass, but by the incessant accumulation of depositions from the springs, its surface has gradually been petrified; yet it is still in many places so soft that it requires great caution to avoid plunging into a mire of boiling clay. The space occupied by the depositions measures about 300 feet from east to west, and 344 from north to south. Within this surface are eight primary apertures, filled with boiling water, the four easterly of which do not eject their contents, but remain in a state of constant and violent ebullition. The largest of them exhibits a beautiful oval bason, which opens into several holes at the bottom, and presents to the view some brilliant but inaccessible incrustations.

The more remarkable springs are situate a little farther towards the west, and are from twelve to eighteen feet distant from each other. The largest consists of an irregular aperture, full of beautiful light blue water, which now and then breaks forth in partial jets. A few feet further north lies a small jetter, by which the water is thrown up to the height of about three feet; and at the distance of twelve feet due south-east from this fountain, is situate a fine circular bason, the borders of which exhibit the most beautiful yellow sulphureous depositions. It narrows gradually into a small pipe in the centre, whence jets issue at irregular intervals to the height of six or eight feet. Within the circumference of the bason is a subordinate aperture, but we did not observe it emit either water or steam. The principal spring is the most easterly of the four, and consists of a bason about three feet in depth, perfectly circular, and terminating in a cylindrical pipe through which the water is erupted, with a thundering noise, and accompanied with an immense quantity of steam, to varied heights, of from six to eighteen feet. The incrustations of this fountain are peculiarly beautiful, exhibiting on their surface the most delicate efflorescence, and they appear to be of a siliceous nature. The site of the springs itself is covered with a whitish shining substance,

HOT SPRINGS OF HVERAVELLIR

which, at a little distance, one would take to be ice; but being constantly in a state of humidity, no perfect specimen of it can be obtained.

The most surprising phenomenon, however, exhibited at this place, is a circular mount of indurated bolus, about four feet in height, from an aperture on the west side of which a great quantity of steam makes its escape with a noise louder than that of the most tremendous cataract. The current of steam issues forth with such force, that any stones you may throw into the aperture are instantly ejected to a considerable height. On thrusting a pole down the hole, we observed a very considerable increase both in the quantity of steam emitted, and the noise accompanying its escape. This mount is called *Auscrholinn*, or "the Roaring Mount," from the circumstance just described.

On our arrival at *Hveravellir*, a violent south wind prevented our seeing the operations of the springs to advantage; but, in the evening, the storm ceased, and we were favoured with a scene more brilliant and interesting than any ever exhibited on a birth-day festivity. From an elevated part of the adjoining lava we had a grand view of the tract, and could not sufficiently admire the connection and regularity observable in the bursts of steam and jets of water that continued to ascend into the atmosphere the whole of the evening. The order they maintained can only be compared to that observed in the firing of the different companies of a regiment drawn up in order of battle. The play commenced on a signal being given by the Roaring Mount, which was instantaneously followed by an eruption of the largest jetting fountain at the opposite end of the tract, on which the turn went to the rest, vast columns of steam bursting from the surface of the general mound, while the jets rose and fell in irregular beauty. Having continued to play in this manner for the space of four minutes and a half, the springs abated for nearly two minutes, when the Roaring Mount renewed the signal, and the explosions took place as before.

The following morning, on leaving my tent, I was surprised to find a remarkable change in the appearance and

phenomena of the Grand Jetter. Instead of being full of water, and jetting at intervals, as it had done the preceding evening, the bason was completely empty, but a column of spray continued to be thrown up without intermission to the height of twelve feet, accompanied with clouds of steam, and a loud thundering noise, resembling that of the Roaring Mount, which had considerably abated in its fury. The spring continued in this state for more than three hours, when the bason again began to fill, and ultimately the same play began that we had witnessed before, only there was a remarkable diminution in the quantity of steam emitted from the mount; but as the storm had again commenced, its abatement may have been occasioned by this, and not by any change or derangement in the mechanism of the springs.

Besides the steaming apertures just described, numerous rents and chasms appear in the lava towards the south for more than a mile, through which clouds of steam unremittingly make their escape, and many of them are so hot that it is impossible to approach within some yards of them. As we walked over these solfatarras, whose spiracles were scattered with such profusion around us, one of our party had nearly sunk through the crust, which, in many places, is very thin; and the accident, which proved rather alarming, was of some use to us, as it taught us the necessity of being more cautious in selecting our steps in future.

In the middle of this burning tract, which may with strict propriety be termed the *Campi Phlegræi* of Iceland, is a large surface covered with the depositions of ancient springs, that appear to have been of enormous magnitude, especially one which exhibits the remains of a mount twice the size in circumference of that of the *Geyser*, near *Haukadal*, in the southern quarter of the island On the rising grounds to the east of the springs are numerous beds of blue, red, and yellow bolus, together with a multiplicity of minor apertures filled with boiling water; and even in the gulley, where we pitched our tents, the bolus was so hot, that on taking up our poles the ends of them could not be touched. It is likely we should not have slept with the composure we did,

VIEW OF THE SKAGAFIORD, AND MODE OF TRAVELLING.

had we been sensible that we were so near the devouring element, to whose agency the operations going on around us were to be ascribed.

At the north end of the tract are still to be seen the remains of a den that has been inhabited by robbers within the last thirty years. It consists of a natural rent in a bubble of the lava, which has been so artificially closed up with broken fragments of the same substance, that no person could have supposed it to be any thing else than a common grotto in the lava. It is very conveniently situated for cooking victuals, as there is a large boiling kettle at the distance of only a few yards. When Olafsen and Povelsen visited the place, they erected a pyramid about half way between this den and the Roaring Mount; but it has been entirely demolished by the robbers, who, in all probability, regarded it as too conspicuous a beacon to be allowed to stand in the vicinity of their haunt. Whether the one we erected close to the Mount will prove more durable, time must shew.

On the 25th we had such a storm from the south, that it was in vain to think of travelling before noon. The wind blew in violent gusts from the gulleys in the lava; and the extensive flat country between us and the north, seemed entirely filled with clouds of sand, affording some faint idea of an Arabian simoom. About twelve o'clock the storm began to abate, and my companions pursued their course towards the south country, while I directed mine towards the north. The road lay for some hours across fields of sand and gravel, till I arrived at the vast commons belonging to the inhabitants of *Hunavatns-Syssel*, where numerous flocks and herds were feeding in every direction. On either hand were large fens, where I observed plenty of swans nursing their young ones, over which they manifested a particular care, and hurried them away as soon as they heard the noise of the horses. At this time the young swans were still without feathers, and could only escape by the nimble use of their legs. One that I caught had nearly died of fright, and endeavoured as much as possible to hide its head amongst the grass, but on my setting it at liberty, it ran with great velocity towards a lake

where the rest of the family were swimming in safety. After crossing the river *Beliandi*, I arrived in a short time at the western bank of the majestic *Blanda*, whose waters rolled heavily along to the main; and what excited no small degree of interest, was the distance to which the two rivers flowed after their junction in the same channel, ere they were actually *blended* together. The water of the former is black, whereas that of the latter, coming from *Arnarfell Yökul*, possesses the same whiteness with the other *Yökul* rivers in Iceland. The *Yökul* river maintained its superiority for more than three miles, when, arriving at a small cataract, the waters are completely mingled by the fall, and the river then assumes a darker hue than it presented before.

Having skirted the *Blanda* for upwards of four hours, I came at last to the ford called *Blönduvad*, where its waters are spread over the surface of nearly half a mile, and divided into numerous streams, none of which was of any considerable depth, except one, which nearly reached the backs of the horses. It is frequently unfordable at this place, in which case travellers must proceed a long way down to the inhabited part of the country, where several good ferries are to be met with. The road now lay across a long dreary moor, till I came to the entrance of *Blöndu-dal*, the sight of which, at first, inspired me with the hope that I was not far from the habitations of men, and that my day's journey would soon end; but I had still to submit to a tedious ride of three hours, before I could find a pass into the valley, so great is its steepness on both sides. Before arriving at the first farms, I could faintly discover the *Blöndu-gil*, a narrow precipitous channel through which the collected body of water is poured with a tremendous roar into the valley. A little past midnight I pitched my tent close to the farm of *Bolstad*, while my mind was penetrated with feelings that can only be experienced by those who have spent several days in barren and inhospitable deserts.

Next day I prosecuted my journey down *Blöndu-dal*, which terminated, in the course of some hours, in *Lánga-dal*, or the Long Valley, in which I found some of the best

looking farms I have seen in Iceland. It is clothed with rich grass, amongst which I observed a vast proportion of wild clover; the meadows are well watered, and afford plenty of hay, and the mountains yield excellent pasture for the sheep. The farms of *Holltastad* and *Geitaskard*, particularly struck me as possessing a very superior appearance, the latter of which owes its present form to the skill and diligence of the excellent Justiciary Einarson, who dwelt here when Sysselman of the district.

After pitching my tent in the evening, and just as I had begun to fill up my Journal, the arrival of a large caravan was announced, two of the conductors of which came to pay me a visit, and seemed wonderfully gratified with the sight of an Englishman, there never having been any of my countrymen in this quarter before. One of them was a goldsmith, well known in Iceland for the neatness and perfection of his workmanship, which almost rivals that of the best artists in Copenhagen, though he has never learned the trade, or been out of his native island. He has also made a watch without any assistance. The other I took at first to be of a dull and stupid turn of mind, but we had not conversed many minutes when he began to expatiate on a plurality of worlds, with an eloquence and exactitude that perfectly astonished me. "There is, for instance, *Jupiter* and *Saturn*, and——" forgetting, and placing his hand on his forehead, "and——the planet lately discovered by Dr Herschel in London. They must be inhabited; they are of the same nature with our earth; they are not globes of fire." Though disappointed in his expectations of obtaining absolute certainty from me on the subject, he was pleased to find that I agreed with him as to its extreme probability, and regretted much that it was not in his power to visit the Doctor, as he had many questions to propose to him on this and similar topics.

Leaving *Lânga-dal* on the 27th, I proceeded round the end of the mountains to *Höskuldstad*, where I met with a hearty reception from the Dean of *Hunavatns* Syssel, an aged man, who has filled this office for thirty years, takes a

lively interest in the spread of the Gospel, and could not sufficiently express his gratitude for the good done to the parishes within his jurisdiction, by their having been put in possession of the word of life. All the copies that had come to the neighbouring factory had instantly been disposed of; and, in some of the dales, every house had been provided with the treasure. In the evening, I rode with the Dean to *Skagastrand*, where I experienced the most hospitable treatment from Mr Schram, to whose exertion the Society is indebted for the speedy distribution of the Scriptures in this quarter of Iceland.

The factory consists of two dwelling-houses, a shop, and three or four warehouses, and is pleasantly situated at the northern termination of a small creek, formed by the projection of a ridge of irregular columnar rocks, the continuation of which is visible at a short distance in the sea, where they assume more of a basaltic appearance. From the top of the rocks, you have a fine prospect of the spacious gulf, which, further up, opens into the *Huna*, *Mid*, and *Hruta* Fiords, on the opposite coasts of which rise the bold promontories and snow-capped mountains in *Stranda* Syssel, receding in irregular perspective till they are terminated by the North Cape. Behind the factory is the high mountain of *Spâkonufell*, the summit of which bears a striking resemblance to the walls of a fort, and to both sides stretch a range of lower mountains, which are broken every now and then by intervening vallies. Near *Höskuldstad* is a most beautiful display of basaltic rocks; some of which still occupy their original positions, and others are thrown down, and lie scattered about in every direction.

Sketched by Captn. Brisak. Engraved by R. Scott Edinr.

EXHIBITION OF BASALTS NEAR HÖSKULDSTAD.

CHAP. XVI.

Leave Skagastrand—Hvam—Valley of Skagafiord—Drángey—Glaumbæ—Mœlifell—Holum—Church of Urdir—Intelligent Peasant—Mödrufell—Sira Jon Jonson—His excellent Character—Forms a Tract Society—Return through the Desert—Yfri Reykium—Alftavatn—Hot Springs of Reykium—Earthquakes—Sulphur Mountain, and Springs of Krisuvik—Leave Iceland—Arrive in Copenhagen.

On the 28th of July I again left *Skagastrand*, and pursued my course up a valley called *Halladal*, at the upper end of which I came to *Thverâ*, a small but neat farm belonging to Mr Schram, where I was treated with coffee, after which I entered a mountainous desert which lasted for several hours. About seven in the evening I descended into the Outer *Laxârdal*, and took up my abode for the night at the parsonage of *Hvam*, the occupant of which, Sira Vigfus Eirikson, expressed the greatest joy at seeing me, and did every thing in his power to accommodate me during my stay. He is a young man of considerable abilities, and actuated by a sincere desire to do good to the souls of his fellow men. It has long been his wish, and that of many of his brethren, that an annual meeting were held in the north of Iceland, to consist of such of the clergy as approved of it, for the purpose of encouraging each other in the work of the Lord. Situated as the clergy in Iceland are,—cut off from all communication with each other, they feel little or no community of interest; the great object is apt to dwindle away even where it has once been in sight; and a deplorable apathy, if not actual apostacy ensues. Were they, on the other hand, to assemble once or twice in the year, in or-

der to hear some of their number deliver a discourse on the duties, difficulties, encouragements, &c. of the pastoral office, it would naturally tend to stimulate them to exertion, keep alive in their minds a sense of the awful responsibility attaching to the charge they have undertaken, and produce the best effects on their respective congregations. It gave me pleasure to learn that the Dean was extremely favourable to the measure; and there is little reason to doubt, that, were the matter fairly represented to their superiors, they would obtain liberty to carry their wishes into effect.

At noon the following day I set out with Sira Vigfus for the nunnery of *Reinastad*, where he intended to preach the following day. The road lay for the most part across the two mountainous tracts of *Laxârdals-heidi* and *Gaungu-skard*, to the south of *Tindastol*, a large mountain, the sides of which display numerous strata, piled one above another, in the most regular manner. Having reached the summit of the tract, we had a fine view of the extensive valley of *Skagafiord*, one of the most fertile and populous districts in Iceland. The valley is divided by the *Hrafnavötn*, or the river described in the account of my former journey to the north, as the formidable *Vökulsâ*, which takes its rise in the *Arnarfell* Yökul. Before reaching this part of the country it receives a number of tributary streams, which swell it to a prodigious size; and, before falling into the bay from which the valley derives its name, it divides into two branches, leaving a beautiful island, called *Hegraness*, in the middle. Numerous mountains of a grand and lofty appearance bound the valley on either side, but are intersected in various places by subordinate vallies, which open into that of *Skagafiord*. The coast looks rugged and precipitous, and the bay itself presents to the view a number of lofty islands. The largest of these is *Drângey*, the sides of which are quite perpendicular, and rise to the height of nearly six hundred feet above the level of the water. Its extent is estimated at 2100 feet; and, on account of the richness of its grass, and the immense number of sea-fowl which are caught there an-

nually, it is reckoned the most productive of any spot of the same size about the island.

On the 30th, which was the Lord's Day, Sira Vigfus preached and administered the sacrament, both at *Reinastad*, and the neighbouring church of *Glaumbœ*. The congregations were large, especially at the latter place, where the church was quite crowded. His sermons, which were animated and faithful, seemed to make a deep impression on the hearers, and a great majority of them were bathed in tears while he dwelt upon the love of God to our sinful world. The inhabitants of this tract manifested the strongest desire to obtain copies of the Holy Scriptures, of which the greatest want prevailed among them. In the whole parish of *Glaumbœ* I was concerned to find only *three* Bibles among the population of *fifty* families.

After the conclusion of the service, I proceeded up the west side of the valley, which chiefly consists of meadow land, to *Mœlifell*, the abode of Sira Jon Conradson, Dean of the Syssel of *Skagafiord*, whom I found sincerely desirous of promoting the best interests of his countrymen, and happy at the provision which had been made for the supply of their spiritual wants. His attention is much bent on the intellectual improvement of the young people within his deanery; and it forms one of the more prominent features in his official visits, to examine into the degree of their progress in the acquirement of religious knowledge. The anticipation of distributing the Scriptures among them the following season afforded him great delight.

Next morning, after maturing a plan for supplying the poor with copies of the Scriptures, I left *Mœlifell*, accompanied by the Dean, and, passing the hot springs of *Reykium*, which did not present any appearance particularly worthy of notice, directed my course to the ferry of *Grund*, where I crossed the river without any difficulty. At first sight I took the ferryman for an Italian, as he was more swarthy than any Icelander I had seen; but on inquiry I found that he was a native of this district, but had served both in the Danish and Austrian armies, and borne his part

in two engagements against Napoleon. An invincible attachment to his native soil prompted him to relinquish all the advantages which were offered him in more favoured climes; and the attention paid him by his countrymen, who listen most eagerly to the minutest circumstances of his story, affords him a source of gratification which he could not have expected among strangers. Crossing a number of dangerous bogs, we came to *Flygamire*, the ancient residence of Gissor Jarl, a name celebrated in Norwegian history, and the place where the northern consistory continued to be held till the removal of the Bishop from *Holum*. I here parted with the Dean, and obtaining a fresh guide, proceeded on to *Holum*, where I arrived about two o'clock in the morning.

On the 3d of August, I again took leave of the kind family at *Holum*, and crossing the *ás*, or low mountainous tract between that place and *Kolbeinsdal*, I descended into this valley, where I obtained a guide to conduct me across the mountain-road of *Heliadalsheidi*, the ascent of which I found very steep, though not so difficult as that farther south, which I had to cross the preceding year. The rocks on both sides of the pass wore a very broken and rugged appearance; and many of the adjacent mountains presented a bold and precipitous front, regularly divided into a number of horizontal strata. The rain, which had commenced after we began to ascend, continued to increase as we advanced, till we had almost gained the summit of the pass, when it began to snow, and, in the course of a short time, the tops of the mountains were entirely white.

Having arrived at the most elevated part of the tract, the extensive valley of *Svarfadardal* opened on our view; and the appearance of the mountains, intersected by the adjacent breaks and vallies, was very noble and commanding. About eight o'clock in the evening we arrived at the farm and church of *Urdir*, where, as it was impossible to pitch my tent, on account of the storm, the peasant persuaded me to lodge all night in the church. On my remarking to him, that in my native country it was not reckoned any honour

to sleep in church, he very smartly replied, that it was deemed equally disgraceful among them to do so in the day-time; but he was certain there could be no harm in sleeping there during the night. I now took possession of the place, which, I was happy to find, was in a good state of repair, and entirely free from draught; and proceeded without delay to fit up my bed, which could only be accomplished by tying the one end of my hammock to the railing which surrounded the altar, and the other to a pillar supporting the pulpit in the middle of the church.* I here enjoyed as comfortable a night's rest as ever I did in my life; and, in the morning, I could not help reflecting on the very different feelings with which I was penetrated in my boyish days, when I could not have gone near a church, or passed through a church-yard in the dark, for any possible consideration.

Of the intelligence and general information of the peasant, I was furnished with a most surprising proof the following morning. Finding that he took a very lively interest in the success of the British and Foreign Bible Society, I gave him a brief view of the extent of its operations; and, among other documents which I read to him, was the very interesting letter addressed by the King of Persia to Sir Gore Ouseley, relative to the new version of the Persian New Testament.† Having mentioned that it was dated in the year 1229, a little boy, who was standing beside us, observed, that "it must be a very old letter." "No, my lad," replied the peasant, turning to him, "you must recollect that letter is not written according to our computation; it is dated agreeably to the *Hegirah*."

After making an excellent breakfast on boiled rice and milk, I prosecuted my journey down the valley, in the course of which I had to cross a pretty considerable river by which

* The reader will doubtless smile, when he reflects, that the altar being at the end, and the pulpit in the middle of the church, the whole length of the edifice is little more than twice that of my hammock; but if he should ever pass Kingsland toll-bar, near London, he will find a chapel belonging to the Establishment, situated on the west side of the road, which is precisely of the same dimensions.

† See Eleventh Report, App. p. 128.

it is divided, and afterwards one of a still larger size, which flows into it from *Skidudal*. Having reached a beautiful green spot near the northern bank of the river *Hörgá*, I pitched my tent there for the night; and on the morning of the 5th I paid a visit to my good friends at *Möðruvalla Abbey*, *Akur-eyri*, and *Hrafnagil*, and proceeded to the parsonage of *Möðrufell*, where I received a most cordial welcome from the worthy incumbent, Sira Jon Jonson.

I had seen this excellent clergyman at *Akur-eyri* in 1814; but his extreme modesty, and the shortness of our interview, rendered it impossible for me to form any adequate idea of his character or abilities. From the manner, however, in which he adverted to the extension of the kingdom of Christ, and the anxiety which he discovered about the advancement of vital piety among his countrymen, I could easily perceive that he was actuated by a very different spirit from that by which the great majority of professing Christians are influenced; and encouraged him to carry into effect a plan which he had formed with a view to the circulation of religious tracts throughout the island. In the course of the winter I received two very interesting letters from him, informing me that he had followed my advice, and had succeeded in the formation of an Icelandic Tract Society, to which he had obtained upwards of three hundred subscribers; and that the plan was patronized by Conferenceraad Thorarinson, the deputy-governor of the north. * He was waiting with impatience for my arrival; and we now spent two days together in the most interesting and agreeable manner. I found in him a man of sterling piety, apostolic simplicity, and anxious solicitude about the welfare of his fellow-men, and possessed of scriptural and comprehensive views of divine things. His acquirements as a scholar are very considerable, and have, together with the consistency of his

* To encourage the Icelandic Society, the sum of £10 was voted them by the Religious Tract Society in London; and they have already put into circulation, or are engaged in printing, not fewer than *twelve* different tracts, most of which are translations of the tracts published by that Society, and very extensively circulated throughout Great Britain. (1818.)

character, procured for him the regard and esteem of his superiors, and indeed of all who are acquainted with him. The management of the affairs of the Tract Society could not have been vested in better hands; and much good may be expected to result from the circulation of such tracts as are written or revised by this worthy friend of truth.

The good man was quite delighted with the accounts I gave him respecting the numerous institutions which had recently been established for extending the benign influences of the moral reign of Jesus among the sinful inhabitants of our globe. They were as cold waters to a thirsty soul. His eyes sparkled with joy as he told me of his intention to impart the same intelligence to his countrymen, that such of them as felt interested in these things might be partakers of his joy, and that it might excite many to serious reflection, who rested in the cold formalities of nominal Christianity.

On the 8th, I was under the necessity of bidding a long farewell to this devoted servant of Christ, and his equally pious and interesting family. Accompanying me to the upper end of the valley, and procuring for me a guide to proceed with me as far as the first station on the road leading into the interior, he returned to his humble abode, with a heart, I doubt not, overflowing with gratitude to God for all the wonderful things he had heard on this occasion.

The following morning I once more abandoned the habitations of men, and entered the dreary and inhospitable regions through which I passed on my way to the north in 1814, and which are described in the former part of the Journal. The guide conducted us across the *Vökulsâ*, at no great distance to the south of which I pitched my tent for that night; and the fog in which we had been enveloped having cleared away next morning, he returned, and I proceeded with my servant and the horses into the interior. We had not proceeded far, however, before the fog again thickened around us, and completely hid from our view the mountains on either side, from which we were to take our bearings of the direction in which we were to travel. This circumstance proved the more alarming, as the servant had

never travelled this way before, and I had only traversed the region once myself; add to which, the entire effacement of the track in many places, owing to the melting of the winter snows. However, by proceeding as nearly as we could straight forward, we always found it again; and before dark we had fairly passed the south-western termination of the *Vökul*. We had still a ride of nearly fifteen miles ere we could reach the smallest patch of vegetation, most of which we performed in the dark. At times we began to fear that we might miss it, and then the painful recollection forced itself upon my mind, that upwards of thirty miles lay between us and the next green spot in our route. About nine o'clock we had the inexpressible pleasure of finding the sand give place to the grass and willows of *Grânaness*, where I instantly tented, and, after partaking of some refreshment, retired to rest, greatly fatigued with the long ride, but enjoying, perhaps, a greater share of tranquillity of mind than I should have done had I been in the midst of the most populous city.

On the 11th the heavens were clear and serene. I started at an early hour, and pursued my journey to the northern bank of the *Hvitâ*, where I halted a short time for the sake of the horses; and then fording the river, ascended the rising ground which terminates in *Blâfells-hâls*, having reached which, I could again descry the *Geysers* sending forth vast columns of steam into the atmosphere; and inviting me once more to the contemplation of the wonders of nature, which are exhibited in that quarter of Iceland.

Though it got dark before I left the desert, I succeeded in finding the path which leads to *Holum*, and experienced, on my arrival at that place, all that kindness and hospitality which the general appearance of its inhabitants, the preceding year, had led me to expect. The following morning I proceeded to the *Geysers*, where I spent two days, partly with a view to rest my horses, and partly that I might avail myself of the last opportunity I should, in all probability, ever have of witnessing so sublime a spectacle as that which is here presented to the view of the traveller. The result

of the observations I made during this visit, I have already inserted in the former part of the Journal. *

On the morning of the 14th I left the *Geysers*, and taking the eastern road to *Reykiavik*, entered the extensive marshy plain which stretches from this part of the island to the south coast between *Eyrarbacka* and the *Eyafialla* Yökul. In the course of the day, I fell in with two hot springs, one of which lay near *Yfri Reykium*, but it was very diminutive in size, and did not present any remarkable phenomena; but the other, situated close to the cottage of *Sydri Reykium*, is more worthy of observation. It consists of a large irregular bason, which appears to communicate with the subterraneous reservoir of hot water by means of a rent in the ground; for on the explosion of the fountain, the jet bursts forth from near its southern margin, and, after continuing to rush up with great impetuosity for the space of about twelve seconds, it runs gradually across the bason till it reaches the opposite margin, when it again subsides, after having played about twenty seconds. The greatest diameter of the column appeared to be between two and three feet, and the height of the jets about twelve. At a short distance from this fountain, where it has its outlet into a rivulet, is another small boiling spring, but it does not erupt, and is used by the people of the cottage for boiling, washing clothes, &c.

From this place, I proceeded across a number of dangerous bogs till I reached the *Bruará*, which I had crossed the preceding year, but which I now found much more formidable, owing to the great accession it receives to its contents from the *Apa* and *Laugarvalla* lakes. Skirting its eastern bank for some time, I passed a fine cataract down which its waters were dashed with resistless fury, and arrived at the ferry, when I got the whole of my cavalcade across without any difficulty. I now directed my course over a dreary moor, which, from the inequalities of its surface, evidently rests on a bed of lava, which has, in all probability, descended from one of the volcanoes to the north-east of *Thingvalla*.

* See p. 73. note.

Having stayed all night at a solitary farm, about six miles to the west of *Skalholt*, I renewed my journey on the morning of the 15th; and, after passing a number of red volcanic cones, of immense size, I encountered a dreary tract of lava, over which I had to scramble for several hours, and which presented such prodigious heights and gulleys, that were the sea, when brought into agitation by the most violent storm, and running, as the phrase is, mountains high, suddenly to congeal, it could scarcely furnish a counterpart to the scene before me. What must then have been the terrific appearance of this region, when the red-hot flood of melted substances rolled across it, consuming every thing that lay in its way, and raising its fiery waves to the height they still exhibit!

On reaching the southern margin of the lava, I arrived at the *Alftavatn*, a sheet of water upwards of a mile in breadth, which connects the *Thingvalla* lake with the river *Sog*, through which their collected waters are discharged into the *Ölfusâ*, near *Eyrarbacka*. Concluding from the nature of the tract, that the bottom of this lake consisted entirely of lava, it was not without the most lively impressions of danger I entered it on horseback, lest I should fall into some of the fathomless cracks formed by the earthquakes, which are very common in this part of the island. What increased the danger, was the circumstance that the water was rendered so turbulent by a strong westerly wind, that it was impossible to discover the bottom. Happily the water was not so deep as I had suspected; and, though completely wet, I gained the opposite shore without meeting with any accident.

I now entered a singularly wild region of volcanic formation, where nothing presented itself to the view, but hills of tuffa, or streams of ancient lava, partially covered with moss; and continued to ascend for some time, till gaining the summit of the pass, when the whole of the extensive level tract between Mount *Hekla* and the sea opened before me. From this place I descended by a circuitous route between huge masses of tuffa which have been dislodged from the adjacent moun-

tains, and arrived about three o'clock in the afternoon at the church of *Reykium*, a little to the north of which, I pitched my tent, at the distance of a few yards from the most considerable of the hot springs with which the tract abounds.

Having dined, I devoted the evening to the contemplation of the natural wonders of the place. From below the church, a valley, or rather a wide gulley, stretches back to the distance of some miles between the mountains, and exhibits in the extensive banks of hot sulphur and clay, and the numerous columns of steam which rise into the atmosphere in every direction, the most convincing proofs of the conflagration which is still going on at no great depth in this part of the island, while the volcanic appearance of the mountains and rocks in the vicinity leads back the mind to ancient scenes of devastation and ruin.

The largest jetting spring is known by the name of *Geyser*, which designation it has in common with the majestic fountain near *Haukadal*. It is situated at a short distance to the north of the church, at the base of a beetling mountain, the crags of which rise to the height of between four and five hundred feet above the spring. This subterraneous fountain has two apertures through which the water and steam make their escape; the more southerly of which continues to spout incessantly, and throws the water to various heights of from three to twelve feet; but the other aperture, which is only separated from it by a distance of ten feet, is the more remarkable of the two. It is surrounded by an incrusted brim; and a large stone, which has been precipitated from the mountain, lies directly across it, owing to which the water is prevented from rising to that height which it might otherwise attain. Notwithstanding this obstruction, however, the eruptions, which take place about fifteen times in the twenty-four hours, are carried with amazing velocity, and a tremendous noise, to the height of at least thirty feet; and the vast clouds of steam which make their escape along with the water, add greatly to the interest of the scene. While the eruption lasts, which is generally about three or four minutes, an immense quantity of water is discharged

by the spring; and to judge from what I witnessed during my stay there, I should suppose that the quantity at present discharged cannot be inferior to what it was when Sir John Stanley * visited these springs in the year 1789, at which time Mr Baine found that the quantity of water thrown up every minute to be 59,064 wine gallons, or 78.96 cubic feet.

At some distance from this spring, and close to the margin of the river which divides the valley, lies another remarkable fountain, called the *Badstofa*. It consists of an irregular aperture, which appears to open into an immense excavation, beneath a high bank of red bolus, which here projects towards the river. Into this excavation the water sinks the moment the eruption ceases, and continues alternately to retreat and be impelled forward again like the waves of the sea, at the depth of three feet below the margin of the aperture. At the same time, a rumbling noise is heard, which is most probably occasioned by the confinement of a quantity of steam, by means of which the water is dashed against the sides of the excavation, and some quantity of it is suffered to escape.

The spring having remained in this state of comparative quiescence for the space of five minutes, a slight concussion of the ground takes place, loud subterraneous reports are heard; and the water is thrown out, partly by perpendicular jets, to the height of twelve feet, and partly in an oblique direction towards the river. This latter jet carries along with it the greatest quantity of water, and generally reaches a height of twenty feet. While the fountain is in action, which is generally about ten minutes, a number of large waves are thrown over the ground in front of it, by which a number of uncommonly fine and beautiful calcareous incrustations are formed; and when the steam is exhausted, the water subsides, as described above.

In the intervening ground, a great number of boiling springs, and steaming apertures, make their appearance; and it requires no small degree of courage to walk among them, as it is impossible to say how thin the arch of clay may

* Account of the Hot Springs in Iceland.

be which separates you from the boiling abyss below. In many parts beautiful banks of variegated bolus present themselves; and I had the satisfaction of contemplating the interesting process described by Sir John Stanley; the formation of what appeared to be jasper, from its soft state in the bolus, till it has gone through all the degrees of induration, and ultimately become so hard that it will strike fire from steel.

About half a mile farther up the valley, and on the same side with the springs just described, appears, a huge chasm filled with boiling water, from the south side of which a spring throws out the water in a direction perfectly horizontal, emitting at the same time a great quantity of vapour, and bellowing with a very disagreeable noise. At a short distance to the north of this, is a large break in the ground, which has evidently been formed by the roof of one of the excavations having given way with which the earth is perforated at this place. In the middle of this hollow, which may be about fifteen feet below the general surface of the ground, lies a large pool of turbid water, from which a considerable column of the same liquid is almost uninterruptedly thrown to the height of nearly twenty feet.

On passing from this spot along the left bank of the river, I was surprised to find steam issuing from within the margin, and, on examining the place, I found that several springs existed in the very bed of the river; and the quantity of boiling water which they threw up was so great, that it could not be kept under by the cold water above it, but forced its way through the stream in a very amusing manner. At some distance, on the south side of the river, is a great assemblage of springs, of which two, called the *Akkra kvrrar*, are remarkable, on account of their size, but they never throw up the water.

There are also about *Reykium* several vapour springs, one of which, called the *Seyder*, or Boiler, is situated close to the *Geyser*, and consists of an aperture about a foot and a half in diameter, through which a vast quantity of steam issues forth incessantly with a loud noise. This aperture is

surrounded with banks of blue, yellow, and red bolus, on the surface of which a considerable quantity of pure sulphur appears, and in some places small streaks of alum were visible.

Early on the morning of the 16th I was alarmed by an uncommonly violent eruption of the *Geyser*, the water of which was carried to a much greater height than I had observed it the preceding day, and fell in part with a tremendous dash directly upon my tent. Availing myself of a momentary suspension of its operations, I rushed out, and taking my station at a convenient distance, I contemplated with amazement the immense quantity of water which continued to be poured forth for upwards of a quarter of an hour.

The whole tract of *Olfus*, in which *Reykium* is situated, is much exposed to earthquakes. Indeed it appears to lie exactly in the angle of a subterraneous line of communication, which, with great probability, is supposed to exist between *Reykianess* and the volcanic mountains in *Gullbringe Syssel*, and *Mount Hekla*, and the volcanic Yökuls in the eastern quarter of the island; and must therefore be subjected to commotion when any of these mountains are in a state of activity.

Of the dreadful physical evils to which Iceland is exposed, scarcely any are more alarming than earthquakes. Many of these awful convulsions of nature have not been recorded in the annals of the country; yet the number they do exhibit is more than sufficient to excite feelings of the most tender commiseration for its inhabitants in the breast of every friend of humanity.

The first of which any notice is taken, happened in the years 1181 and 1182; but we are not informed of any bad effects resulting from them. In 1211, the year in which the first mention is made of an eruption from the submarine volcano near *Reykianess*, numerous earthquakes happened, in which several lives were lost, and the houses, in many parts of the island, completely thrown down. In the years 1260 and 1261, severe shocks were felt in the island of *Flatey*, in the *Breidafiord*. In 1294, the ground rent in *Rângârvalle*

Syssel; the *Rângâ* river changed its course; a number of farms were overturned; and, for the space of eight days, all the wells were white as milk. In the year 1300, during an uncommonly violent eruption of *Hekla*, earthquakes were very frequent in the south of Iceland, and many houses were thrown down. They were repeated with still greater violence eight years afterwards, when eighteen farms were destroyed, and numbers, both of human beings and of the brute creation, perished.

In 1311 a still more dreadful earthquake took place, by which not fewer than fifty-one cottages were thrown down or entombed; and so great was the darkness occasioned by the sand and ashes thrown up by some of the volcanoes, that it was impossible to travel from one part of the island to another. Among other severe calamities to which the inhabitants were subjected in the year 1313, was an earthquake in which eighteen houses were destroyed. In 1339, severe shocks were felt throughout the southern quarter of the island; farm-houses were overturned; men and cattle were raised from the ground by the violence of the shocks; several of the mountains disrupted, and fell; the earth rent to a great depth; and among other collections of boiling water which made their appearance, was a hot spring, sixty feet in diameter, which broke forth in the mountainous tract, a little to the east of *Mosfell*. In the year 1370 an earthquake happened, in which twelve farms in the district of *Ölfus* were totally destroyed.

In 1390 and 1391 numerous shocks were felt, especially in the latter year; fourteen farms in the districts of *Grimsness*, *Floa*, and *Ölfus* were destroyed, and several people buried in the ruins. The ground rent in various places; boiling water sprang up; and the effects of the earthquake were felt as far as *Holltu-vörðu-heidi*.

In 1552, a severe earthquake was felt, but no damage was done by it; and in 1554 the shocks were continued with such violence for the space of a fortnight, that the inhabitants durst not risk their lives in their houses, but were obliged to live in tents. Several shocks were felt in the year

1578; and in 1597 an earthquake again overturned a number of farms in the district of *Ölfus*. In 1614, severe shocks were repeated almost uninterruptedly the whole of the autumn; the consequence of which was, that a number of houses were thrown down. During the winter of 1633 the farms in *Ölfus* were again destroyed; and the rockings were so incessant, that in many of the churches there was no service almost the whole of the winter. In 1657 and 1661 very severe shocks were experienced in different places, particularly in *Fliotshlid*, to the south-east of *Hekla*, and a number of houses were levelled with the ground.

Most tremendous shocks were felt in the districts of *Ölfus* and *Floa* on January 28th, April 1st and 20th, 1706. Not fewer than twenty-four farms were destroyed; the provisions of the inhabitants spoiled, and many of the cattle killed. Shocks were continued with greater or less violence till the approach of summer, and were more perceptibly felt in the vicinity of *Hekla* than elsewhere in the south.

As the eruption of the *Skaptár* volcano was the most dreadful of any recorded in the annals of Iceland, so the earthquakes which happened on the 14th and 16th of August, 1784, which was the year after the eruption, were by far the most destructive of any ever felt by the inhabitants of that island. Though the principal scene of its devastations appears to have been about the districts to the west of *Hekla*, it was nevertheless felt over the whole island, and in the Syssels of *Snafellsness* and *Isafiord* the shocks were uncommonly severe. In the Syssel of *Arness* alone, not fewer than three hundred and seventy-two farm-houses were damaged; sixty-nine were entirely subverted; and sixty-four received so much injury that they could not be inhabited. The number of houses that were thrown down, throughout the island, amounted to one thousand four hundred and fifty-nine; upwards of two hundred were partly subverted, and three hundred and thirty greatly injured. The churches which were damaged amounted to nineteen, and of these four were completely overturned.

Besides the damage done to the houses, the grass-lands

suffered much injury from the rents which were produced, the changing of the course of the rivers, and the immense quantities of rock and gravel which were thrown down from the sides of the mountains. Many of the old boiling springs were closed up; and others appeared, from which the water was thrown to a great height. At the *Geysers*, near *Haukadal*, not fewer than thirty-five new springs made their appearance.

In the year 1789, another dreadful earthquake happened, the shocks of which only intermitted at first for the space of ten minutes, but were continued more sparingly a considerable part of the summer. A number of wide rents were formed in the earth; and among other remarkable phenomena attending this earthquake, was the change which took place in the lake of *Thingvalla*. The bottom of this lake sunk towards the north-east, and the water being precipitated thither, encroached considerably on the land, and in many places overflowed the ancient road which ran in that direction; whereas, the lake became so shallow towards the south-west, that it was now almost dry where there had been formerly four fathoms water.*

In 1808 a violent shock was felt, which made some alteration in the mechanism of the hot-springs; but no devastation whatever followed. The last concussion that was observed in Iceland took place in the month of June, 1815; but it was very slight, and was felt only in the northern parts of the island.

It was my intention to have visited the tract between *Reykium* and *Cape Reykianess*, before leaving the island; but as the ships were nearly ready for sailing, I was obliged to abandon the idea. The following description of the Sulphur Mountain and hot springs in that dismal volcanic region, as given by Sir George Mackenzie, † cannot fail highly to interest every reader.

"At the foot of the mountain, (about three miles distant

* See a paper on this subject by the late Bishop Finnson, in the Transactions of the Icelandic Society.

† Travels in Iceland, p. 115.

from *Krisuvik*,) was a small bank, composed chiefly of white clay, and some sulphur, from all parts of which steam issued. Ascending it, we got upon a ridge immediately above a deep hollow, from which a profusion of vapour arose, and heard a confused noise of boiling and splashing, joined to the roaring of steam, escaping from narrow crevices in the rock. This hollow, together with the whole side of the mountain opposite, as far up as we could see, was covered with sulphur and clay, chiefly of a white or yellowish colour. Walking over this soft and steaming surface, we found to be very hazardous; and I was frequently very uneasy when the vapour concealed my friends from me. The day, however, being dry and warm, the surface was not so slippery as to occasion much risk of our falling. The chance of the crust of sulphur breaking, or the clay sinking with us, was great, and we were several times in danger of being much scalded. Mr Bright ran at one time a great hazard, and suffered considerable pain from accidentally plunging one of his legs into the hot clay. * From whatever spot the sulphur is removed, steam instantly escapes; and, in many places, the sulphur was so hot that we could scarcely handle it. From the smell, I perceived that the steam was mixed with a small quantity of sulphurated hydrogen gas. When the thermometer was sunk a few inches into the clay, it rose generally to within a few degrees of the boiling point. By stepping cautiously, and avoiding every little hole from which steam issued, we soon discovered how far we might venture. Our good fortune, however, ought not to tempt any person to examine this wonderful place, without being provided with two boards, with which any one may cross every part of the banks in perfect safety. At the bottom of this hollow, we found a caldron of boiling mud, about fifteen feet

* Mr Hooker appears to have been in an equally perilous situation near this place; for he informs us, that in endeavouring to avoid one of the sulphureous exhalations, he stepped up to his knees, in a semi-liquid mass of hot sulphur and bolus, and would probably have sunk to a greater depth, had he not instantly thrown himself with his whole length upon the ground, so as to get his hands on a more solid soil. *Tour*, vol. i. p. 240.

in diameter, similar to that on the top of the mountain, which we had seen the evening before; but this boiled with much more vehemence. We went within a few yards of it, the wind happening to be remarkably favourable for viewing every part of this singular scene. The mud was in constant agitation, and often thrown up to the height of six or eight feet. Near this spot was an irregular space filled with water, boiling briskly. At the foot of the hill, in a hollow formed by a bank of clay and sulphur, steam rushed with great force and noise from among the loose fragments of rock.

"Further up the mountain, we met with a spring of cold water, a circumstance little expected in a place like this. Ascending still higher, we came to a ridge composed entirely of sulphur and clay, joining two summits of the mountain. Here we found a much greater quantity of sulphur than on any other part of the surface we had gone over. It formed a smooth crust, from a quarter of an inch to several inches in thickness. The crust was beautifully crystallized. Immediately beneath it we found a quantity of loose granular sulphur, which appeared to be collecting and crystallizing as it was sublimed along with the steam. Sometimes we met with clay of different colours, white, red, and blue, under the crust; but we could not examine this place to any depth, as the moment the crust was removed, steam came forth, and proved extremely annoying. We found several pieces of wood, which were probably the remains of planks that had been formerly used in collecting the sulphur, small crystals of which partially covered them. There appears to be a constant sublimation of this substance; and were artificial chambers constructed for the reception and condensation of the vapours, much of it might probably be collected. As it is, there is a large quantity on the surface, and by searching, there is little doubt that great stores may be found. The inconvenience proceeding from the steam issuing on every side, and from the heat, is certainly considerable; but, by proper precautions, neither would be felt so much as to render the collection of the sulphur a matter of any great

difficulty. The chief obstacle to working these mines is their distance from a port, whence the produce could be shipped. But there are so many horses in the country, whose original price is trifling, and whose maintenance during summer costs nothing, that the conveyance of sulphur to *Reykiavik* presents no difficulties which might not probably be surmounted.

"Below the ridge on the farther side of the great bed of sulphur, we saw a great deal of vapour escaping with much noise. We crossed to the side of the mountain opposite, and found the surface sufficiently firm to admit of walking cautiously upon it. We had now to walk towards the principal spring, as it is called. This was a task of much apparent danger, as the side of the mountain, for the extent of about half a mile, is covered with loose clay, into which our feet sunk at every step. In many places, there was a thin crust, below which the clay was wet, and extremely hot. Good fortune attended us; and we reached, without any serious inconvenience, the object we had in view. A dense column of steam, mixed with a little water, was forcing its way impetuously through a crevice in the rock, at the head of a narrow valley, or break in the mountain. The violence with which it rushes out is so great, that the noises thus occasioned may often be heard at the distance of several miles; and, during the night, while lying in our tent at Krisuvik, we more than once listened to them with mingled awe and astonishment. Behind the column of vapour was a dark coloured rock, which gave it its full effect.

"It is quite beyond my power to offer such a description of this extraordinary place, as to convey adequate ideas of its wonders, or its terrors. The sensations of a person, even of firm nerves, standing on a support which feebly sustains him, over an abyss where, literally, fire and brimstone are in dreadful and incessant action; having before his eyes tremendous proofs of what is going on beneath him; enveloped in thick vapours; his ears stunned with thundering noises:—these can hardly be expressed in words, and can only be well conceived by those who have experienced them."

Crossing the *Henglafill* mountains, which took me nearly four hours, owing to the inequalities of the lavas, which they have poured down in every direction, I made my horse quicken his pace, and reached *Reykiavik* about five o'clock in the afternoon.

Had I arrived a few days sooner, I might have proceeded to Liverpool, in a vessel which sailed for that port the following morning; but it was still necessary for me to make some final arrangements respecting the affairs of the Bible Society, which prevented me from availing myself of that opportunity. I was under the necessity, however, of using all possible expedition, as the Danish vessels were also on the eve of sailing.

Having taken leave of the Bishop, and the rest of the public authorities in *Reykiavik*, from all of whom I had experienced the kindest and most unwearied attentions during my stay in Iceland, I embarked on the 20th of August, on board a Danish vessel, bound for Copenhagen. As we stood out from *Reykiavik*, and the land on both sides of the *Faxe Fiord* began to recede from my view, I was conscious of strong feelings of regret, which not even the anticipations necessarily connected with my return to the continent of Europe were able fully to repress. I was leaving an island, distinguished by its natural phenomena from every other spot on the surface of the globe, where I had been furnished with frequent opportunities of contemplating and admiring some of the more sublime displays of the wisdom and power of God in the operations of nature. But what principally attached me to Iceland, was the exhibition of moral worth, and the strong features of superior intellectual abilities, which had so often attracted my notice during the period of my intercourse with its inhabitants. My thoughts were also directed to the effects which were likely to result from my visit. I had circulated extensively among them that blessed Book, which is able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ; which alone contains an authenticated, complete, and most satisfactory revelation of the character, purposes, and will of the Supreme Ruler of the

universe; and directs the guilty sons of Adam to the only possible way in which they can obtain true and lasting felicity. And while I reflected on the responsibility which attaches to the situation of such as are favoured with this revelation, and the aggravated guilt and condemnation of those who receive not the truth in the love of it that they may be saved, my earnest prayer for the Icelanders was, that they might have grace communicated to them from above, to enable them suitably to improve the inestimable privilege which had been conferred upon them.

On the 6th of September, after a rough passage of seventeen days, I again arrived in Copenhagen, where I met with a hearty welcome from the numerous friends I had left behind me in that city.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

A HISTORICAL VIEW

OF

THE TRANSLATION AND DIFFERENT EDITIONS

OF THE

ICELANDIC SCRIPTURES.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

HISTORICAL VIEW, &c. &c.

It is impossible for a mind imbued with Christian sentiments to take a retrospective view of the state of the church, during the dismal ages of papal darkness, without being penetrated with feelings of the most tender sympathy for the numerous millions who were denied all access to the benefits accruing from an intimate acquaintance with the precious volume of Divine revelation. Dignified with the name of Christians, but destitute of the spirit, and uninfluenced by the power of genuine Christianity; professedly the worshippers of the true God, but ignorant of the Scriptural character of Him who is "the way, and the truth, and the life;" placing the essence of religion in the punctual observance of a number of superstitious, unmeaning, and ridiculous ceremonies, instead of love to God and benevolence to man: the votaries of hierarchical impositions remained in an awful state of moral blindness, degradation, and misery. The sacred fountain of truth was locked up in a language with which only a few were conversant, and was absolutely unknown to the generality of those who were constituted teachers of others. Nor was this the case merely in those countries which lay contiguous to the seat of that power whose antichristian tyranny rested on ignorance and superstition

as its surest props; the same veil of spiritual darkness was drawn over the horizon of more distant regions, and their inhabitants were equally removed from the cheering beams of "the light of life."

In the midst, however, of this horrible and universal gloom, it is not to be doubted that God had reserved to himself a remnant who did not bow the knee to Baal, who worshipped him in spirit and truth, and whose minds, by a wonderful combination of providential circumstances, were enlightened by the truth, and thus prepared for shewing forth his praise. How many of them fed on the heavenly manna, by receiving instruction in their vernacular languages, it is now impossible to determine; yet, to judge from the translations, or fragments of translations, which have reached our times, their number seems to have been greater than has commonly been supposed. The Anglo-Saxon versions of King Alfred, and Ælfric the abbot; the English of Wickliffe and Trevisa; the French of Stephan de Ansa, Guiart des Moulins, and others; the German of Ottfreid, Notker, Rabanus, Maurus, &c.; a Danish translation in MS. supposed to have been written about the beginning of the fourteenth century, and still preserved in the Royal Library at Copenhagen; and those of St Briget, Rawald, Buddha, &c. in Swedish, with several more that might be adduced: all prove, that in various places the Scriptures, or parts of the Scriptures, were accessible by certain unlettered individuals, even in the darkest ages of Roman superstition. It is true, many of them deserve the name of paraphrases rather than that of versions, and some of them are obscured by mystic interpretations; yet the light they contain was sufficient to guide the weary and bewildered pilgrim to the realms of endless felicity; and it is only to be deplored that they were not more generally known, their orbit being circumscribed by the walls of a convent, or, at most, they were confined to a small select circle, beyond which it was deemed unlawful to disseminate them.

That something of this kind should have been attempted in Iceland, is a conclusion to be drawn from the early and successful application of many of its inhabitants to literature; and that the Bible actually was translated into Icelandic long before the Reformation, has been believed on the testimony of Eric Brochenhuus, Governor of Mandale, in Norway, who asserts, that, in the year 1567, he saw a copy of the Bible in that language; that the

version had been made three hundred years previous to that date; and that the initials of the chapters were embellished with gold.* It has, however, been called in question, whether it was an entire version of the simple text of Scripture which that nobleman had seen; and it is more than probable that the book he mistook for it was a copy of the famous work, entitled "STIORN," which was composed about the middle of the thirteenth century, by Brandr Jonson, at that time Abbot of *Thyckvaba* monastery, in the eastern quarter of Iceland, and afterwards Bishop of *Holum*.† What confirms this supposition, is the fact, that on turning up certain parts of "Stiorn," it is scarcely possible at first sight not to believe but it is the Bible we have before us; as, for instance, at the end of the preface, where the author, after having described three species of the spirit of prophecy, adds: "Now, it was by the first of these species of sacred prophetic spirit alone that Moses composed five books, the first of which is called Genesis, because it contains the origin, creation, and birth of the world. With this book he begins his written accounts, and the formation of the world, in the manner and with the words which in our language are as follows: "In the beginning God created heaven," &c.

In like manner he subjoins to the account of the death of Joseph: "Here ends the first book of Moses, Genesis, and the second begins, which is called Exodus." This circumstance, combined with the paraphrastic version of a great portion of the Old Testament history contained in this volume, rendered it extremely natural for Brochenhusius, who did not perhaps examine its contents with much minuteness, to view it as a copy of the Scriptures, to which it certainly bears a great resemblance. Of this valuable monument of northern antiquity, several manuscripts, elegantly written on parchment, are preserved in the Arnæmagnæan Library, which is attached to that of the University of Copenhagen. In Iceland, itself, copies are very scarce, as indeed all the ancient manuscripts are. Having been presented with a copy by the very Rev. A. Thorsteinson, Dean of North Mulè Syssel, on my tour through that quarter, I will here insert a brief

* Undalin. Descript. Norveg. p. 168.

† Bishop Harboe's "Kurtze Nachricht von der Isländischen Bibel-Historie" in the Dänische Bibliothek. VIII. Stück. pp. 4. 5.

description of its contents, as it may not prove altogether uninteresting to the friends of Biblical literature.

It is written on paper, in ordinary folio, and consists of 887 pages. The title-page, and especially the initials of the different principal divisions, are embellished with a variety of curious figures, done with red, green, and violet tints, prepared from some of the natural productions of the island. The primary divisions are again subdivided into chapters, to each of which is prefixed a title, or index, of its contents. There are three different hands observable in the manuscript, none of which appear to be very old; and the words are abbreviated in the same way as the Copenhagen codices. The general title is as follows:

Stiorn

á Norrœna Tungo ritoth af Brandi
Abota i Veri Aº Dñi MCCLV
ath scipon Virtholig. Magnuſ
Kgs Hácon' ſ. Lagabætis.

eftir

Sögum AUGUSTINI, HIERONYMI,
BEROSI, ISIDORI, JOSEPHI, &c.

i. e. "*Stiorn*; written in Norse by Brandr, abbot of *Ver*, (or *Thyerabar*,) anno Domini 1255, according to the mandate of the honourable King Magnus Haconson, reformer of the laws, from the accounts of Augustinus, Hieronymus, Berosius, Isidorus, Josephus, &c." As the Icelandic word "Stiorn" properly signifies government or direction, and this volume contains the substance of the Old Testament history, it might be supposed that it received this title with a view to the theocracy or divine government of the Hebrew nation during the period which that history embraces; yet, on the other hand, when we consider that it was written at the instance of King Magnus, who rendered himself famous, by reducing the different books of Norwegian law to one grand code, (whence he obtained the surname of Lagabæter,) it seems most probable that it was so called, because the laws of the theocracy were viewed as the ground-work and model of all equitable legislation.

The work consists of thirteen parts.—I. The history of the creation and the antediluvian world.—II. The period from the

flood to the calling of Abraham.—III. The history of Abraham. —IV. The history of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.—V. The Exodus. —VI. The Mosaic legislation, and the journeyings of the Hebrews in the wilderness.—VII. Joshua.—VIII. Judges.—IX. Ruth.—X. The government under Samuel.—XI. The reign of Saul.—XII. The reign of David.—XIII. The reign of Solomon and the Jewish kings till the captivity.

In many places, a literal version is given of the Vulgate text; in others, especially in Genesis, the sacred history is strongly paraphrased, and interspersed with legendary tales and fanciful interpretations; while in the following divisions, the Scripture account is shortened, and only a brief compendium exhibited of its contents. Between the first and second divisions is inserted a discourse on the nature and design of the nine weeks' fast, in which are contained a number of ridiculous observations, strikingly characteristic of the age in which they were written. After the account of the confusion of tongues, follows a long dissertation on geography, chiefly taken from Isidorus: the history of Abraham concludes with a homily on the temptation of Christ; and, in that of Joseph, we are entertained with a tedious legend respecting Asceneth, how God revealed himself to her; her conversation with an angel, &c.; to dwell on which would only be to trifle with the feelings of my readers. That they may be able, however, to form some idea of the interpretation of Scripture which was current in those days, I shall lay before them the following specimens: "When Adam gave our first mother the name of *Eva*, it was because he foresaw that all who should be born of woman would either enunciate E or A;* it being a fact, that every male child on entering the world begins its crying with A, and every female with E."—"As Nihal, the brother of Tubal-Cain, was sitting in the smithy, and listening to the sound of the hammers, he became sensible of a certain dissonance, whence conceiving the idea of harmony, he invented the different kinds of poetry and music." In like manner, after the relation of the victory of Abraham, we are told that he held a jubilee, and "that the reason why the children of Israel afterwards kept a jubilee, every fiftieth year, was, because Lot was fifty years old when he was delivered out of captivity; or, according to others, because fifty years had elapsed from the period of his departure from Haran.

* Lat. E *vel* A—*Eva!*

Treating of the curse of mortality pronounced upon Adam, the remembrance of it is said to be still continued in the holy church, when, on Ash Wednesday, she gives her members ashes, repeating these words: "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." It deserves to be noticed, that this custom is not yet entirely forgotten in Iceland; inasmuch as on the above-mentioned day the females generally endeavour to bind what they call *oskupokar*, or small bags filled with ashes, to the coats of the men as a trick, at which they greatly triumph if they succeed in the attempt.

When we deduct these and similar passages, and confine our attention solely to those in which the author adheres to the text, it cannot be denied that the volume contains a considerable portion of sacred Scripture, and is justly entitled to a place in the history of Biblical Translations. As a specimen of the translation, I will here subjoin part of the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, together with a literal English version in the parallel column.

Drottinn vitradiz Abrahe i dalinum Mambre, á einn thann dag sem hiti var mikill uti, sem hann sat i scalfs tialldbudar durum, ok er Abraham litadiz um tha syndiz honum sem iij menn stodi thar dringum iheá honum, hverium er hann moti rennandi, ok til iardar framfallandi, dyrkadi tha einn af theim sva segiandi, far ei i brott min herra fra mer thinum thionustu manni ef ek hefer nockuru tima giftu fundit ok fengit i thinu augliti, vil ek hellar bera ydr til litit vatu, at ther thvait thar i fætr ydra, ok hviliz her under treuu. Man ek fram setia fyrir ydr nockut litit braud. Narit ydr ok styrkit sva ydvart lif ok hiörtu, verit sidann á veg; fyrir thina skylld væntir mik at ther vikit higat til ydars thionustu manz. Their svöruda: Göe eftir thi sem tha seger. Hann skundadi heim i tialldbudina til Sarah, ok bad hana sem skiotast taka iij [illegible] braud, ok mat göra theim thar af, enn scalfr hann for thagat sem naut hanns voru, ok tok thadann einn hinn bezta kalf mio[illegible]gunn

"The Lord revealed himself to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, when the day was very hot without, and he sat in the door of his tent. And as Abraham looked about, it appeared to him as if three men stood there, close beside him—running to whom, and falling forward to the ground he worshipped one of them, saying: Pass not away, my Lord, from me thy servant, if at any time I have found favour in thy sight: I will rather bear you a little water, that ye may wash your feet in it, and rest yourselves here under the tree. I will place before you a little bread: nourish yourselves, and thus strengthen your life and hearts: then pass on. For thy sake I hope ye will turn hither to your servant. They answered: Do according as thou hast said. He hastened home into the tent to Sarah, and bade her take as quickly as possible three rations of bread, and prepare meat to them of it: but he went himself to the place where his cattle were, and took from thence one

ok fekk i hendr svini sinum, ok bad hann sioda thegr i stad, ok hann giordi sva. Sidann bar Abraham fram fyrir than smiör ok miolk, ok thar medr kalfinn thann tima sem hann var sodinn, hann stod hiá theim undir trenu.

of the best, a very young calf, and gave it to his servant, and bade him boil it instantly, and he did so. Afterwards, Abraham placed before them butter and milk, and also the calf when it was boiled, and stood beside them under the tree."

The interpretations of the text are mostly taken from the *Historia Scholastica*, a work written in the twelfth century, by Peter Commestor, chancellor of the university of Paris, and held in such repute in the dark ages, that it was not only supposed to possess equal authority with the Scriptures, but was even preferred before them. Considerable use is also made of the *Speculum Historiale*; and numerous quotations are made from Josephus, St Jerome, St Augustine, and the rest of the fathers.

It is not unworthy of notice, that such parts of the sacred history as are inserted in the ancient Norwegian production, entitled *Kongs-Skugg-Sio*, or "The Royal Mirror,"* coincide almost verbatim with the same passages in Stiorn. The only difference consists in the use of a greater number of expletives in the former; from which it seems natural to conclude, either that the translations have been derived from a common source, or that the author of the Royal Mirror has known and availed himself of Stiorn. It is also remarkable, that the various reading of the former is almost universally the textual reading of the latter. The following passages will be sufficient to shew the agreement and discrepancies that exist between them:

STIORN.	KONGS-SKUGG-SIO.
Thá David var gamall ok nær örvasa.	*—— var gamall madur ok allnær á aurvasa alldri.*
Thessir varo i Rádagörd met hannem.	*Thessir varo haufdingiar i rádagerd met hanem.*
Joab hertogi Davids.	*Joab hertogi Davids kongs, ok frændi hans.*
Hallt ok ord vid Simei, tho at hann bölvadi mer er ek flydi fyrir Saker Absaloms brodr thins, ok tho met theim hætti at hann hafft nockum minning thess glæps, at æ stadfestist su bölvan yfir hannem at Eylifu er hann bölvadi mer Saklausum.	*Hallt ok ord minn vit Simei tho at hann bölvadi mer tha er ek flyda ofriki brodur thins Absaloms, ok tho met theim hætti, at hann hafi nockora minning glæpa sins til idran, at eigi stadfestist su bölvan eilifliga yfir haufdi hannem, at hann bölvadi mer Saklausum.*

* First published at Soröe, 1768, 4to.

There is also a striking resemblance between the language and style of these works, both of them departing, in some degree, from the pure and classic Icelandic, and approaching more to the Latin idiom than most other writings of that period.

From the few documents that have been handed down to us, relative to the state of sacred literature in Iceland during the reign of superstition, it would appear that copies even of the Vulgate were by no means common; and the learned Bishop Jonson supposes, even that in many instances in which mention is made of the holy book (*helga bok*) being used in the administration of oaths, nothing more is meant than an image or representation of the Gospels cut in wood and painted, or cast in a mould, relics of which were still found in his time in the cathedral of *Skalholti*.* The Psalms of David in Latin, however, were more frequently to be met with; and such as were distinguishingly strict in their devotions made conscience of repeating a third part of the Psalter daily. The only attempt that was made to communicate the knowledge of the Divine oracles to others, seems to have been owing to the zeal of Thorlak Runolfson, who lived in the twelfth century, and of whom it is said, in the Hungurvaka, that "he read lectures on the sacred Scriptures;" † but whether these lectures were public, and in the vernacular language, or merely delivered to such as were designed for the priesthood, cannot now be ascertained.

Notwithstanding the extreme distance of Iceland from the spot where the light of the Reformation first dawned on the benighted nations of Europe, that zone of the moral hemisphere was early irradiated with its beams, and invested with those inestimable blessings which the Sun of Righteousness never fails to impart to all who are within reach of his influence.

Oddur Gotshalkson, whose father filled the episcopal see of Holum, was the instrument employed by Providence for the purpose of effecting this important and beneficial change. In his sixth year he was sent over to Norway to the care of his uncle Guttorm, a lawyer in that country, by whom he was introduced into the school of Bergen, at that time taught by the pious and learned Magister Petreus. Happily for himself and for Iceland, he continued abroad till the doctrines of the Reformation began

* Hist. Eccles. Island [illegible] p. 183.

† *Hann las y fir heil[illegible]*

to excite a general sensation throughout the north of Europe. These doctrines attracted the attention of Oddur, who assiduously weighed their merits, and, even while others slept, made them the subject of close and impartial investigation. He soon perceived that they were vastly different from the principles with which his mind had been imbued from his infancy; but which of them were consonant with the will of God, was a question which gave him no small perplexity, and to which it was some time before he obtained a satisfactory solution. At last he was directed to the only way in which it was possible for him to arrive at the truth. Conscious of his lack of wisdom, and his liability to error, he "asked of God, who giveth unto all liberally, and upbraideth not." For three successive nights he prostrated himself, half naked, on the floor of his apartment, and besought the Father of Lights that he would graciously be pleased to open the eyes of his understanding, and shew him whether the principles of Rome, or those of Luther, were from heaven. The result was, a firm conviction that the cause of the reformer was the cause of God and truth.

Not long after this he left Bergen, and proceeded to Germany with the view of prosecuting his studies, and obtaining a more thorough acquaintance with the doctrines he had espoused. Amongst other places he visited was Wittenberg, where he heard Luther and Melancthon, from whose sermons and conversation he derived much spiritual improvement. It is not improbable that it was here he first conceived the idea of translating the New Testament into his native language, and that he returned to Iceland full of the pious and noble design.

The difficulties, however, which Oddur could not but anticipate, were sufficient to have deterred any ordinary mind from engaging in such an undertaking. Ögmund, bishop of Skalholt, into whose employ he went on his return from the continent, was the sworn enemy of every thing of the kind. Happening one day to surprise the rector of the cathedral in the act of reading the Gospel of Luke in German, in an obscure corner of the church, he instantly demanded what book it was he read? The poor priest was panic-struck, and could not make any reply; at which the Bishop was enraged, and, with as much delicacy as lenity, exclaimed, "Shew me it, thou son of a ——." Gisle, for so the priest was called, was obliged to hand him the New Testament.

which he had no sooner opened than he condemned it as full of Lutheran heresy, and threw it with a vengeance into the court before the church. Yet, it was at the residence of this haughty and bigotted prelate, by one of his own servants, and partly at his expense, that this blessed, but by him detested book, was to be translated into the vulgar tongue!

It is a remarkable fact, that the first Icelandic New Testament owes its birth to a place similar to that in which the glorious Subject of its testimony entered the world. To escape detection, Oddur made choice of a small cell in a cow-house, in which humble apartment he laid the foundation of a work which has proved a blessing to thousands, and which will continue to operate in its saving effects on thousands yet unborn. He was otherwise employed here in transcribing ancient ecclesiastical statutes and constitutions, on shewing his progress in which to the Bishop, he obtained fresh supplies of paper and other writing materials, by means of which he was enabled to prosecute his favourite enterprise. He had not advanced farther, however, than the end of Matthew, when he was under the necessity of leaving the episcopal see. This removal was most probably occasioned by some information having been lodged against him and his crypto-lutheran brethren on account of their clandestine meetings,* and the principles of the Reformation, which it became every day more and more apparent they had embraced.

On quitting Skalhollt, he took a lease of the farm of *Reykium*, in the district of *Olves*, where he brought his translation to a conclusion in the year 1539. As he found it would be in vain to think of printing it at the press which the Bishop of Holum had established in his diocese, he sailed the same year to Denmark, in which country he hoped, from the progress the Reformation had there made, to meet with men who would espouse the cause he had in hand, and facilitate the execution of his noble undertaking. Nor was he disappointed in his expectations. His Majesty Christian III. patronised the work; and, on its being approved by the university, issued an edict authorizing its publication. Having

* The associates of Oddur were, Gisle Jónson, the priest above-mentioned; Gissur Einarson, the Bishop's secretary; and his steward Oddur Eyolfson; all of whom met at the house of the latter, in order to read the Scriptures, and the works of Luther. *Hist. Eccles. Island.* tom. iii. p. 204.

thus obtained the Royal privilege, it was put to the press, and appeared the following year with the title:

THETTA ER
hid Nya Testament
Jesu Christi eigenleg ord og Evangelia
hver hann sialfr
predikadi og kendi her i heimi.
Sem hans Postular og Guds Spialiamenn
Sydann Skrifudu:
thau eru nu hier utlögd a Norrænu
Gudi til lofs og dyrdar
en Almuganum til Gamdar og Sialuhialpar.

"This is the New Testament, the very words and Gospels of Jesus Christ, which he himself preached and taught in this world, and which his Apostles and Evangelists afterwards committed to writing. These are now here translated into Norse, to the praise and glory of God, and the benefit and salvation of the common people."

The name of the place where it was printed, that of the printer, and the date, are postfixed thus:

Thryckt uti Konungligum Stad Roschylld af mier Hans Barth,
XII. *Dag Aprilis, Anno Domini* MDXL.

The size of the volume is large 12mo. The title-page is ornamented with a cut, representing at the top a venerable personage in the attitude of preaching to a number of people who are sitting around him on the ground; and, at the foot, are two men, the one with a large key in his hand, from whom several persons, that from their beards and attire seem to be monks, are running away perfectly affrighted; the other is extending his arms as if he would wrest the key from the former. The mystery of these hieroglyphics is by no means recondite. They strikingly point out the effects which were to result from the circulation of the New Testament in Iceland. The word of God would be preached in purity to the inhabitants; the key of knowledge would, in spite of the hatred and rage of its enemies, be put into their own hands; and before the gospel-light thus admitted, their ghostly deceivers would disappear like the vermin of night before the morning sun.

On the inside of the title-page is another cut, representing the royal Psalmist praising God upon the harp, above which are the words: "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" and at the bottom: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him," John 12; together with a note from John xiv. 6.

The prefaces of Luther are prefixed, that to the Apocalypse excepted, which Oddur did not deem it prudent at that time to publish, on account of the harshness of some of the Reformer's expressions respecting the Roman hierarchy. There are also on the margin a few notes and parallel texts from Luther. The chapters are not divided into verses, but into paragraphs, which generally comprise two or three of our verses. The initial of each chapter is large, and ornamented with such figures as are commonly to be found in books printed at that period. The typography is rather coarse; and, besides the abbreviations peculiar to the Icelandic, there are several of such as were used by the monks. A list of the Gospels and Epistles is subjoined, according to the order in which they were read in the churches. At the end is an address to the inhabitants of Iceland, in which the translator states the supreme importance of the New Testament, and gives a compendious but lucid and scriptural view of its contents.

With respect to the merits of the translation, we have, in the royal grant prefixed, the opinion of the Copenhagen Professors, who declare it to be done "exactly according to the Latin version," or the Vulgate, from which it has certainly been made, with the exception of some few passages, in which Oddur has followed the version of Luther. In the choice of his renderings, however, he appears to have been more judicious than many contemporary translators, neither following the Vulgate, where it evidently was false, nor blindly adopting the variations of Luther, how high soever the opinion was which he entertained of his merits.

A considerable number of omissions occur, most of which, however, are common to almost all the translations made at the same period, and are to be ascribed to the small degree of progress which Biblical criticism had then attained. In point of language it bears the palm from all the succeeding versions, and is, on this account, highly esteemed by such as cultivate Icelandic. Besides the New Testament, Oddur Gottshalkson translated also the 53d

chapter of Isaiah into his mother tongue. To this he added short expository notes, and got it printed at Copenhagen in the year 1558. He must also have translated some entire books of the Old Testament (although it does not appear that he ever published them) as Bishop Gudbrand declares he had adopted Oddur's version, after having revised and corrected it, into his edition of the whole Bible. * Nor must I omit mentioning, to the praise of this friend to the word of God, and his country, that such of his translations as he made public were printed at his own private expense. In the year 1554, he was made Lawyer of the northern division of the island, which office he filled with much credit till 1556, when he lost his life in the river *Laxá* in the *Kiosár* district. †

In 1562, Olaf Hialteson, the first Lutheran bishop of Holum, published a small quarto volume called the "Gudspialla Bok," which contains the Gospels and Epistles arranged in the order according to which they were to be read in all the churches in his diocese, and may be viewed as a second edition of certain portions of Oddur's New Testament: the compiler having availed himself chiefly of that version in writing out the lessons of which the work consists. It was printed at Breidabolstad by Jon Matthieson, the first printer in Iceland. The learned author of the Eccles. Hist. ascribes a New Testament to the same bishop; ‡ but it was likely this volume he had in view. It has since been reprinted 1581, 1599, and 1609 in 8vo; and in 1617, 1658, 1670, 1686, 1706, 1725, and 1750 in 12mo.

A translation of the Proverbs of Solomon appeared in the year 1580 in large 12mo, under the following title:

Salomonis Ordsqvider
a Norrænu
Actorum X.
Hver sem ottast Gud
og gïörer Rietvise a theim
hefur hann thocknan.

* Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 376.

† Harboe ut sup. Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 202—206. and Kiobenhavnske Selskabs Skrifter, tom. v. p. 286.

‡ Ut sup. p. 361.

At the end is subjoined: *Thryckt a Holum i Hialltadal af Jone Jons Syne, anno* 1580. The translation is supposed to be the same that was begun twenty years before by Gissur Einarson, the first Lutheran bishop of *Skalholt*, who also translated the book of Sirach, printed the same year at *Holum*. It is done from Luther's version, with the exception of a few passages, in which the rendering of the Vulgate has been preferred. According to Bishop Jonson,* the translator was one of the most learned Icelanders of his day.

It was not till the year 1584 that the inhabitants of this island were put in possession of the whole of the revealed will of God. For this invaluable treasure they were indebted to Gudbrand Thorlakson, whom God raised up, and endowed with a more than ordinary degree of ingenuity, zeal, and perseverance; all of which qualities were indispensably requisite for so arduous and expensive an enterprise. He had no sooner been installed into the episcopal see of *Holum*, than he set himself with all his might to relieve the spiritual wants of those committed to his care. Notwithstanding the strenuous and indefatigable exertions of his predecessors, he found that much ignorance still prevailed, and that many deeply rooted prejudices and errors still continued to operate in the minds of the people; and he was convinced that the most effectual method that he could employ for eradicating these evils would be to furnish his countrymen with the Bible—that book which "enlighteneth the eyes," and proves "a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the paths," of all who consult its contents. He accordingly formed the resolution of establishing a printing-office, through the medium of which, he might, with greater facility, carry his pious design into effect; and actually purchased, for the sum of 1100 rix-dollars, the press that had been set up at *Breidabolstad*, under the direction of Jon Matthieson, a Swede, whom Jon Areson, the last Catholic bishop of *Holum*, had brought over for that purpose. Little did this turbulent and ambitious dignitary anticipate, that the very press which he had procured from a foreign country, with the view of facilitating his hierarchical plans, was one day to be employed in printing a book which completely disproved the legitimacy of his claims to the character of a Christian bishop, and condemned, in the most pointed manner, the doctrines and ceremonies of that communion of which he was so

* Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 269.

zealous an advocate. Had he entertained the most distant idea that it was afterwards to furnish the common people with the word of God in their own language, he would most assuredly have refunded the expenses to the printer, and supposed he was doing God a service by committing it to the flames. How wonderful are the ways of the Most High! He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and accomplisheth his own all-wise purposes, through the instrumentality of men who have diametrically opposite ends in view.

Jon Jonson, who had already acquired some knowledge of the art of printing from his father, was prevailed on by Bishop Gudbrand to undertake a voyage to Copenhagen, in order to gain a more perfect acquaintance with the business. In the meantime, the bishop himself was assiduous in the preparation of a good translation, and provided types and other articles necessary for such an establishment: so that in the space of three years after he was invested with the episcopate, he had every thing in readiness for beginning to print. The press was first set up at *Nupufell*, in the valley of *Eyafiord*, which farm his Danish Majesty was pleased to grant to the printer and his successors in office for a perpetual residence. Finding, however, that his personal presence was often required, the Bishop got it at length removed to *Holum*, where he rendered it more complete by the addition of various implements, which he had partly obtained from abroad, and partly constructed by his own ingenuity and labour; for, being a great mechanic, he could imitate almost any thing he saw, or which he heard described by others. This aptitude was of great service to him, as it enabled him, in no small degree, to accelerate and beautify his typographical productions.

Notwithstanding the unremitting zeal and noble liberality of Gudbrand, it was with grief he found that he was not in possession of means adequate to defray the expenses connected with so stupendous an undertaking, and therefore applied to his Majesty, Frederic II. who not only authorized him to raise a rix-dollar from every church in Iceland, but also, of his own royal bounty, contributed to the execution of the work. The exact amount of his donation is not known with certainty, some estimating it at 500 rix-dollars, some at 800, while Helvaderus states it to have been 3000 rix-dollars. * The Bishop afterwards obtained a second

* Dänische Bibliothek. ut sup.

edict from his Majesty, in which it was ordered, that every church on the island should purchase a copy of the Bible when published. Both grants are prefixed to the work, which at length made its appearance, in folio, under the following title:

BIBLIA
Thad Er, Öll
Heilög Ritning, utlögd
a Norrænu
Med Formalum Doct:
Martini Lutheri.

Prentad a Holum af
Jone Jons Syne
M. D. LXXXIIII.

In English: "*Biblia;* That is, The whole of Sacred Scripture translated into Norse, with the Prefaces of Martin Luther, D.D. Printed at Holum, by Jon Jonson, 1584." At the end is added: *Thetta Bibliu verk var endad a Holum i Hialltadal, af Jone Jons Syne thann* VI *Dag Junii Anno Domini* M. D. LXXXIIII. *Einum, Almattigum, Odaudligum Gude, Födur, og Syne, og heilögum Anda, Sa sem er einn Gud i threnningu, og thrennur i einingu, theim hinum samma, sie Lof og Dyrd, Heidur og Thackargiörd um alldar allda, og ad eilyfa, Amen.* i. e. "This Bible was finished at Holum, in Hialltadal, by Jon Jonson, on the 6th of June 1584. To the One Almighty and Immortal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, be honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving, throughout all ages, and eternally, Amen."

The typography of this volume, compared with that of the first Icelandic New Testament, is very perceptibly improved, and may even be called elegant, if we modify the expression according to the progress of the arts at that period. The pages are numbered with capitals, after the manner of the German Bible, which, from their augmentation towards the close, give it rather an awkward appearance. The chapters are divided into paragraphs, which are distinguished by capital letters on the margin, for the sake of reference. A number of cuts, for the most part designed and engraved by Gudbrand himself, are inserted in the corner of the

space allotted for the text, and the insignia of the evangelists are prefixed to their writings. The only points made use of, are a stroke drawn downwards from right to left, and a full stop; and almost all the contractions used in Oddur's Testament are retained. As the title intimates, the prefaces of Luther are inserted in their proper places, and his marginal notes and references are also adopted.

The version itself must be considered as the production of different hands. Not only the New Testament, but also some books of the Old, which had been translated by Oddur Gottshalkson, were adopted, after having been revised and corrected by the Bishop, as also a version of the Prophets, and the two books of Maccabees, by Gisle Jonson, whom Bishop Ögmund surprised in the act of reading part of the New Te' ment, but who was afterwards advanced to the episcopal see of Skalholt. The share this prelate had in the translation of the Scriptures is considered to be uncertain by the author of the Eccles. Hist. *Aut*, says he, *universos Prophetas, aut magnam eorum partem, exposuit;* * and again, *Postea autem plerosque, si non omnes Libros Propheticos ex Germanica in Islandicam linguam transtulit, cujus versionis schedulæ aut reliquiæ quædam a posteris ejus diu, aut ad patrum nostrorum tempora, servabantur.* † Being in possession of the MS. itself, I have the pleasure to be able to say, that it not only contains *all* the Prophets, but also the two books of Maccaboes. It is written on paper, and consists of 455 pages, in ordinary folio. The title-page, and the beginning of the preface to Isaiah, are awanting. This preface, as well as those to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, are from Luther, but his prefaces to the lesser prophets are omitted. The pages are divided into two columns, except in two or three places where defective pages have been supplied; the hand-writing is good; and the abbreviations are by no means difficult. At the end of the prophets is the following subscription: *Ender a Malachia propheta: finis. Sie gudi Lofi ad eilyffu, amen. Skriffad thann* 30 *dag Januarii anno domini* 1575. i. e. "The end of the Propnet Malachi. Finis. God be praised for ever, amen. Written the 30th Jan. 1575." And at the end of the whole: *Skrifad i Skalholti Anno* 1574. *Byriad thann* 23 *dag Septembris. endar thann* 10 *dag Martii* 1575. i. e. "Written at Skalholt, Anno 1574. Begun Sept. 23d. Ended March 10, 1575." The au-

* Tom. iii. p. 376. † Ibid. p. 320.

thor is declared, by Bishop Jonson, to have been a pious, diligent, and modest man, who stretched every nerve in rooting out the superstitions of Popery, and establishing the true religion in their place. He was well acquainted with the Latin, but principally studied the Danish and German languages; and was assiduous in reading the best authors who had written in them, and especially the Holy Scriptures.*

Yet, although it is manifest that Gudbrand has availed himself of this translation, it is equally evident that he has taken great pains in correcting and altering it, previous to his adopting it into the Bible. Of this the following specimen, from the conclusion of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, may serve as a proof:

GUDBRAND.

Fyrst hann hefur nu sitt Lyf til Synd offurs utgiefit, tha mun hann Sæde hafa og all leinge Lifa. og Drottins aform mun fyrir hans Hönd framganga. Thar fyrir at hans Sála hefer Erfide drygt mun han fögund sia, og nægd hafa. Og fyrir sijna Vidrkenning, mun hann minn thion sa hinn Riettlátr, marga rietláta giöra, thviat hann ber theirra Synder. Thar fyrir mun eg honum mikin fiölda manna til bytis gefa, og honom skulu hiner Oflugu ad Herfange skiptast, thar fyrir at hann hefr sit lijf i Daudann ut gefit, og er a medal Spillvirkianna reiknadr og hann hefur margra Synder borit, og hefr fyrer yfertrodlu mönnunum bedit.

GISLE.

Fyrst hann hefur nu sitt Lyf til Synd offurs utgiefid: tha mun hann sædi hafa og all leingi lifna, og Drottins astundan mun fyrir hans haund utgreijd verda. Thar fyrir at hans sála hefur erfuide drygtt, mun hann fagund sia oc gnægd hafa. Oc fyrir syna skilnings vitsku mun hann minn thion, sa hinn riettlate marga riettlata giora, thviat han ber theirra Synder thar fyrir mun ec honum mikin flock manna til bytis gefa, oc honum skulu hiner auflugu at herfangi skipttast, thar fyrir at han hefer sitt lijf ij daudann ut gefuit og er a medal spillvirkianna reiknadur, oc hefer margra synder bored, og hefer fyrir yfner tredslu mönnunum bedit.

When we reflect that the revision of the translations, the correction of the press, and the direction of the whole work devolved on Gudbrand alone, we cannot but be surprised at the vigour and diligence with which he prosecuted it, and especially at the close attention he has paid to the correctness of the version. The style and diction, says Bishop Jonson, are in no place dissimilar, but are the same throughout the whole Bible; and as these were peculiar to this worthy prelate, it is clear that the whole has either

* Tom. iii. p. 31f.

been corrected or translated by his own hand. The translation is not only accurately done from the version of Luther, but appears, with the exception of a few passages, to be expressed in such a manner, that Luther himself could not have expressed it better. Besides, the diction is extremely similar, being pure, simple, heroic, and even elegant, yet free from ornament; and the words are admirably adapted to the things they are designed to express.* Nor is the Bishop single in his opinion on this subject. The version of Gudbrand is still regarded by the learned in Iceland as a kind of standard, according to which every good translation ought to be modelled; and were it not for the obsolete phraseology inseparable from the period at which it was made, it might be regarded as absolutely inimitable.

Lest some might be disposed to call in question the validity of this opinion, it need only be observed, that being, for the most part, a faithful mirror of Luther's version, Gudbrand's translation must necessarily be entitled to a proportionate share of the eulogium that has been passed on its original, by men eminent for their erudition and skill in Biblical criticism. Michaelis, after having declared that the Peshito was the very best translation of the Greek Testament he had ever read, adds; "that of Luther, though inferior to his translation of the Old Testament, holding the second rank."† And a still more judicious critic, Griesbach, treating of the different kinds of German translations of the Bible, writes: "Luther still holds his exalted rank; and if we deduct the false interpretations which pretty frequently occur, but which were unavoidable two hundred and fifty years ago, I know of no translator of the Bible, who, on the whole, and in this species of translation, has excelled him in the true art of translation."‡

In a short address to the reader, at the end of the Bible, Gudbrand requests all into whose hands it may come, to ascribe what faults they might find in the execution of the work, whether in respect to the translation or the printing, to human ignorance and frailty; and assures them at the same time, that it had been his grand concern to render it as perfect as possible. After which

* Tom. iii. p. 376.

† Marsh's Michaelis, 2d Edit. vol. ii. p. 40.

‡ Eichhorn's Repertorium, vi. Theil. p. 267.

follows a number of errata which had inadvertently crept into the work.

The impression consisted of 1000 copies, of which one hundred were sent to Hamburgh to be bound, and a bookbinder was brought from that city in order to bind the remainder.

When ready, copies were sold to poorer churches and individuals, for about *eight* or *nine* rix-dollars;* and to those in better circumstances for *ten* and *twelve;* from which it is evident, taking the condition of the inhabitants of Iceland, even in those days, into consideration, that the number of those must have been small indeed who were able to procure the precious volume. Even in milder climes, how many thousands would be forever debarred from the privilege of having the Sacred Oracles in their possession, if they did not obtain perhaps an eighth part of the price? That the real object of the Bishop in the execution of this work, was to promote the glory of God, and the present and everlasting benefit of his countrymen, and not any private emolument, I was furnished with a convincing proof when at Holum; having there obtained a sight of his diary, in which he has regularly entered every thing relative to the printing-office. From this MS. it appears, that he gave away a considerable number of copies gratis; to some parishes *ten*, to others *twenty*, accompanying them with the pious wish, that they might advance the best interests of the receivers.

Bishop Jonson enumerates five particulars which render this edition worthy of notice: It is the first edition of the entire Scriptures in the Icelandic language; it was executed by a single individual in a short space of time; it is the most handsome of all that have been published by private individuals; it has always been the most esteemed on account of the purity of its diction, and, even at this day, it is preferred before more modern translations: and, lastly, if it did not form a new epoch in the ecclesiastical history of Iceland, it certainly kindled a brighter light in the Icelandic church than she had enjoyed at any former period. †

Finding that, after all his exertions, the poorer classes had still little access to the sacred fountain of wisdom, Bishop Gudbrand resolved to reprint that part of the Scriptures which was most s

* About £2 Sterling.

† Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 377.

ed to their necessities, and from the perusal of which, it was likely they would, by the Divine blessing, reap the most advantage. He accordingly published an edition of the New Testament separately in small octavo, the title of which is:

Thad
Nyia Testa-
mentum, a Islendsku.
Yfer sied og lesid, epter theim riettustv
Utleggingum sem til hafa fei[illegible]
Matth. 17.
Thesse er minn El[illegible]
Sonur, a huorium j[illegible]
all[illegible]knan, Hönum
skulu thier hlyda.
Prentad a Holum j Hialltadal,
ANNO
M. DC. IX.

i. e. "The New Testament in Icelandic, revised and corrected, according to the best translations that could be obtained. Matth. xvii. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, him shall ye obey. Printed at Holum in Hialltadal, 1609." Both the general and particular prefaces of Luther are inserted, as also parallels and marginal notes, only these last are not so numerous as in the former edition. As the title intimates, the text is published from the most correct editions of the New Testament in other languages that had come to the hands of the Bishop subsequently to the publication of the Bible; for which reason, it is natural to suppose, that a number of defects are supplied, and several passages altered, in conformity to the greater degree of light that had, in the mean time, been thrown on the Scriptures.

But Gudbrand not only exerted himself to the utmost, in providing his countrymen with the Sacred Scriptures, and other useful books, during his lifetime: * he was also solicitous that, after his decease, they might enjoy the continuance of these blessings; and in his testament, dated Sept. 12, 1611, in default of his son's

* Vide Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 378—381, where Bishop Jonson furnishes us with a list of *eighty-five* works, mostly theological, which issued from Gudbrand's press, between the years 1575 and 1624.

being qualified or disposed for carrying on the printing, he bequeathed the establishment, with all its appurtenances, to the cathedral of Holum, that those who should succeed him in that see, might prosecute the noble work which he had begun. * Nor was his attention turned to the cultivation of the vineyard of others, to the neglect of his own. That precious volume, which he was so anxious to put into their hands, and with which he wished them to be intimately acquainted, was the source whence he drew his own hopes and consolations. Numerous were the broils and troubles in which he was involved, but he experienced the word of God to be an effectual support in the trying hour of affliction; and having made full trial of its powers amidst the vicissitudes of life, he also placed an unshaken confidence in the Divine Testimony, on the arrival of that solemn period when he was called to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death. During his last illness, the Bible lay constantly on the bed beside him; and though unable to read or handle the unwieldy folio, (being affected in his speech and right side by the palsy,) he pointed to such passages as he wished to have read to him for his edification and comfort. † This most respectable prelate died on the 20th of June 1627, in the eighty-fifth year of his age, after having filled his official capacity for the space of fifty-six years. The following effusions of Arngrim Jonas, his friend and fellow-labourer, will not be unwelcome to the learned reader:—

Floruerat magno Germania vasta Luthero,
Gudbrando radiat Patria nostra suo.
Biblia debentur Germanica scilicet isti,
Quod solum e multis jam tetegisse sat est.
Biblia debentur sancto vernacla labori
Hujus: et hinc poscit justa trophæa sibi,
Miles eras Domini, multus versatis in armis
Gudbrande, et ratio nominis inde tui.
Hunc veterum si more ducum tumulemus Achillem,
Ut simul arma viri fulgida tumbo tegat.
Biblia Sacrophago vernacla reponere fas est,
Athlethæ illæ Dei fervidus ensis erant.
Sin statuæ vivo veluti de marmore surgant,
Res eodem recidit, Biblia marmor erunt.
Parca habeat tumulus; Nam cætera fama loquendo
Cum Sole æquatis passibus ire valet. ‡

* Vide Hist. Eccles. Island. tom. iii. p. 381. † Ibid. p. 426.
‡ Dän. Bibliothek. viii. p. 60, 61.

On the demise of Gudbrand, the episcopate of Holum devolved on his grandson, Thorlak Skuleson, who, after having spent three years at the university of Copenhagen, had sustained the offices of Conrector and Rector of the diocesan school As there still existed a great scarcity of Bibles on the island, he formed the resolution of treading in the footsteps of his ancestor and predecessor, and claimed a right to the use of the printing establishment, in virtue of Gudbrand's legacy, which he ultimately obtained by the decision of law, after some altercation with the heirs and near relations of the deceased prelate. He then made application to Christian IV. for liberty to print a new edition of the Holy Scriptures, which that monarch not only granted, but renewed the edict which his royal father had passed in favour of Gudbrand's plan, and generously accompanied these regulations with a donation of 200 rix-dollars from his own privy purse. The Bishop was at the same time ordered to new-model the existing version, according to the Danish translation done by Bishop Resenius; in accomplishing which he was assisted by Svein Jonson, who had also studied at Copenhagen, and at that time officiated as Rector of the cathedral of Holum. On comparing the dates, it appears that no less than *nine* years elapsed from the time the royal privileges were granted, ere the work left the press, which protraction was chiefly occasioned by a want of paper. * Its title is:—

BIBLIA
Thad er
Öll Heilög
Ritning, utlögd
a Norrœnu.
Med Formalum D.
Marth. Luth.
Prentud ad nyu a Hoolum.
M. DC. XLIIII.

i.e. "*Biblia, &c.* Reprinted at Holum, 1644." The impression consisted of 1000 copies. The size is folio, though not quite so large as that of the preceding edition; but both the paper and type are preferable. What renders this edition remarkable, is its being the first into which the division of the text into verses is in-

* Dän. Bibliothek. p. 102. et Hist. Eccles. Island. ut sup.

troduced. Their number is placed sometimes at the beginning, and sometimes in the middle of the line; and at the beginning of a principal paragraph, it stands at the end of the preceding, in order to make way for the large initial. It has a number of cuts, inserted for the purpose of illustrating the Scripture history, which, though still sufficiently coarse, are vastly superior to what were exhibited in the former editions. On the margin are the glosses of Luther, with a considerable augmentation of parallel references.

As it is from this edition that the two most recent impressions have been taken, its text may be considered as exhibiting the version in established use in Iceland. According to the royal order, Bishop Thorlak was enjoined to render the version agreeable to that published in Danish 1607, by the learned Professor Resenius, afterwards Bishop of Zealand. On its first appearance, this translation met with great acceptance in Denmark; a circumstance which, it is likely, was owing to the high repute in which Resenius stood for learning, and the consideration that it was made immediately from the Hebrew and Greek originals, with all the aid that was to be obtained from the advanced state of science, and the different translations which had been made by that time into the European languages. It was soon found, however, to be greatly defective in point of perspicuity, the translator having transplanted the peculiar idioms of the Hebrew tongue into his own, and paid more attention to the genius of the former than that of the latter. "Quæ," says Kortholt, * "ut proximè ad fontes accedunt, ita cultum et nitorem dictionis parum curant, atque Hebraismorum retinendorum studio valde reddita sunt obscura. Sic ut Sermo quo utuntur, maxime in libris dogmaticis, Danicis auribus fere peregrinus sit." Now, although the version of Gudbrand was capable of considerable improvement, it would certainly have lost more than it would have gained by its being rendered entirely conformable to this new Danish translation. This Bishop Thorlak must have been sensible of; for he has actually dared to act contrary to the royal injunction; and it is only in a few isolated passages that the peculiar renderings of Resenius have been adopted. Thus, ακα, which Gudbrand had received into the text, Matth. v. 22. is again omitted; *Frelsaran*, "Saviour," Gen. xlix. 10. is changed for the original word *Shiloh*; and *So-*

* De Variis Script. Lib. cap. 28. 6.

wuren, "the Son," 1 John v. 7. for *Orded*, "the word." On the other hand, Resenius reads ερευνατε, John v. 39. indicatively, whereas the imperative is still retained in the Icelandic. Resenius adopts the reading Κυριω, Rom. xii. 11.; the Icelandic is still conformable to καιρω. Resenius supplies χωρις, James ii. 18. which is omitted in the Icelandic. These, and numerous other passages which might be adduced, shew, that the Bishop either consulted the version of Resenius on certain passages only, or that, on comparing the two versions with each other, he did not find sufficient ground for the majority of the alterations.

I must not, however, conceal my suspicions, that the version according to which Bishop Thorlak was ordered to new-model the Icelandic, was no other than that contained in the splendid folio edition of the Danish Bible, commonly known by the name of "Christian IV. Bible," and published at Copenhagen 1633. The difference between the text of this edition, and that published at the same place in 1589, is very inconsiderable. It is rendered as conformable as possible to the version of Luther, with the exception of those passages in which that version had been taken from faulty readings in the original texts. Now, as far as I can find, this is the very characteristic of the second edition of the Icelandic Bible. The author of the *Eccles. Hist.* says indeed expressly, and quotes Bishop Harboe as his authority, "jubente Christiano quarto accommodatam ad versionem Danicam a Joh. Resenio confectam;" * but it was easy for him to confound the private version of that learned divine with the common translation published under the care of the consistory of the university at the period when he filled the episcopal see of Zealand. The same mistake has been committed by Hielmstierne, who, in his catalogue, † calls Christian IV. Bible the edition of Resenius.

Three years afterwards, Bishop Thorlak published:

DAVIDIS PSALTARE
Med
Formala D. Mart. Lutheri, og
Theirre Stuttre Summu edur
Innehallde sem hann hefur giort
Yfer sierhvorn Psalm.

* Tom. iii. p. 720.

† Bogsamling, vol. i. p. 2.

Prentadur a Hoolum i Hialltadal
epter Bon og Forlage thess Froma Velvysa
Eruverduga Heidurs Manns
Thorleifs Magnussonar ad Hlydarenda,
Anno 1647.

i. e. " The Psalms of David, with the Preface of Dr Luther, and a brief summary of their contents drawn up by him, and prefixed to each Psalm. Printed at *Holum*, in *Hialltadal*, at the request and expense of the pious, learned, and venerable Thorleif Magnusson of *Hlidarenda*, A. D. 1647," 8vo. The version is the same with that of Gudbrand, only the marginal notes and references are omitted. It was reprinted 1675. The Liber Psalmorum, stated by Le Long to have been printed in the year 1619, must either have been Arngrim Jonas' commentary on the 91st Psalm, published at *Holum* 1618, or a Hymn-book (Psalmabok) printed at the same place 1618, 1619, but of which the first edition had been printed 1589.

By a misrepresentation of the circumstances connected with the printing-press, Theodore Thorlakson, Bishop of *Skalholt*, obtained an order from his Danish Majesty, in the year 1685, in virtue of which he removed it to his own see, where he erected it at considerable pains and expense, and bid fair for acquiring the same celebrity by his typographical productions that his father and great-grandfather had done before him. To this he certainly would have been entitled, if, like them, he had availed himself of the improved state of the press, and instantly taken measures for reprinting the Holy Scriptures, seeing neither of the former editions bore any proportion to the population of Iceland; and the lapse of twenty years must have considerably exhausted that printed in 1644. Yet, in a list of forty-six different works which issued from the press, while in his hands, many of which undoubtedly possess considerable importance in regard to the literary history of Iceland,* we only meet with one that claims the attention of the lover of biblical literature, viz.

Harmonia Evangelica,

or " The Harmony of the Gospel-accounts of the incarnation,

* Such as Landnâmabok, Kristnisaga, Saga Olafs Kongs Tryggvasonar, Schedæ Ara Presti, &c.

birth, life, doctrine, sermons, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, according as they are separately described by the holy evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; *Skalholli*, 1687," 8vo. This Harmony is merely a translation of that published by Chemnitius, Lyserus, and Gerhardus. The following brief extract from the preface will give the reader some idea of the work:

"With respect to the translation of the Gospel history, the good men who originally composed this book did not make any new version, but followed the Latin translation of Erasmus, as Chemnitius himself acknowledges in the preface. But I have adopted that of the last edition of the Icelandic Bible, published by my father Thorlak Skuleson, both because it is in general use in this country, and because it perfectly harmonizes with the version of Luther. To this we closely adhered, and have been careful rather to use *the very words of the Bible*, and suffer no part of it to be lost, than set forth any part of the history in a more polished style. And as nothing is omitted which the Evangelists have written, neither is there any addition to the history, a few passages excepted, where certain words are placed within parentheses, for helping the reader to a better understanding of the text."

To the Harmony is added a triple appendix: 1st, An account of the success of the Gospel immediately after the ascension of Christ, which is taken from Acts i. and ii. 2d, A narrative of the lives and death of the Evangelists and Apostles, from And. Hundorfii Theatro Historico. 3d, The history of the destruction of Jerusalem, by Oddur Gottshalkson, which concludes with the letter of Abgarus to our Saviour, and the threefold sentence supposed to have been pronounced against him previous to his crucifixion.

The third edition of the Icelandic Bible was printed under the inspection of Stein Jonson, Bishop of *Holum*. The press, the removal of which to *Skalholli* has already been noticed, was purchased in the year 1704 by Biörn, at that time bishop of the northern diocese, who brought it back to its original station, and kept it going till his death in 1713. When Stein took possession of the episcopal residence, he found that the printing-press was estimated at 500 rix-dollars, the price for which it had originally been sold to the Bishop of *Skalholli*, and as matters then stood, it

was not in his power to remedy the business: but happening ten years afterwards to fall in with the original will of Gudbrand, he applied to the Royal Chancery of Copenhagen for permission to appropriate the establishment to the purposes expressly specified by the testator; the consequence of which was, that an edict was issued, ordering those who laid claim to the press, as theirs by right of inheritance, to appear before commissioners who were appointed to settle the difference. The accommodation accordingly took place at the General Assembly 1724, and the press was restored to the cathedral of *Holum*.

Having, in the mean time, petitioned his Majesty Fred. IV. for permission to print a new edition of the Bible, Stein obtained a renewal of the grants made to his predecessors; but instead of printing the text of the former edition as it stood, he was enjoined to make a new translation from the Danish Bible, printed at the Orphan-house of Copenhagen. The title of this edition is as follows:

BIBLIA
Thad er öll
Heilög Ritning
Fyrir Hanns Kongl. Majest.
Vors Alldranádugasta Arfa
Herra Konungs
FRIDERICUS FIORDA
Christelega Ummsorgun·
Med Kostgiæfne og epter Höfud Textanum
meir enn fyrrum athugud so og med
adskilianlegum Parallelar aukenn.
Thrickt á Holum i Hialltadal,
anno 1728.

i. e. "*Biblia*, That is, the whole of Sacred Scripture, translated with diligence, and more accordant with the original texts than heretofore; by order of his Royal Majesty, our most gracious and rightful Sovereign, Frederic IV. and augmented with several parallel references. Printed at *Holum* in *Hialltadal*, A. D. 1728." The size of this edition is folio, but smaller than either of the two former ones, and consequently more convenient; but the expectations that were raised respecting it were greatly disappointed, both by the badness of the paper and printing, and the very indifferent

state of the text. In rendering the text more conformable to the originals, the Bishop has followed the Danish version with so much servility, that innumerable Danicisms have found their way into his translation, in consequence of which many passages are involved in impenetrable obscurity to the mere Icelandic reader. These circumstances, combined with the high price at which it was sold, (seven specie dollars,) excited a general prejudice against it, and greatly obstructed its circulation, and it is still reckoned the worst edition of the Icelandic Bible.

In the year 1741, the learned and pious Bishop Harboe was sent over to Iceland in the capacity of Visitor-General of the Icelandic churches, in which capacity he travelled over the greatest part of the island, made strict inquiry into the state of the churches, the character and abilities of the clergy, the instruction of youth, &c. The representations he gave in to his constituents were attended with most beneficial consequences, especially in respect to the schools, the state of which was greatly ameliorated. In the course of his visitations, this worthy prelate found that there existed on the island a lamentable deficiency of the Scriptures; and, on his return to Copenhagen in the year 1745, his benevolent disposition prompted him to take the necessary measures for providing it with an adequate supply. On the 3d of June the following year, a royal edict was issued, authorizing the raising of the customary tax of one rix-dollar from every church on the island; and in 1747, the fourth edition of the Icelandic Bible left the press, under the title,

BIBLIA
Thad er
Öll Heilög Ritning
Utlögd á Norrœnu;
Epter Theirre Annare Edition Bibliunnar sem fannst
Prentud a Hoolum i Islande
anno MDCXLIV.
med Formâlum og Utskiringum
Doct. Martini Lutheri,
Einnig med
Stuttu Innehalde sierhvers Capitula,
og so
Citatium.

Thesse Biblia Kostar O Innbundinn Tvo Rijkis
Dale og Thriu Mörk
Prenntud i Kaupmanna Höfn,
I thvi Konunglega Wäysen-Huuse, og med thess
Tilkostnade,
af
Gottmann Friderick Kisel,
anno MDCCXLVII.

i. e. "The whole of Sacred Scripture, translated into Norse, according to the second edition of the Bible, printed at Holum in Iceland, A. D. 1644, with the prefaces and notes of Martin Luther, D. D. and the summaries of each chapter, and the citations. This Bible costs two rix-dollars and a half unbound. Printed in Copenhagen, in the Royal Orphan-house, and at its expense, by Gothmann Friderick Kisel, A. D. 1747." The form is quarto, the paper good, and the typography vastly superior to that of any of the preceding editions. In the revision of the text, and the correction of the press, Bishop Harboe was assisted by Jon Thorkelson, who had formerly been rector of the school at *Skalholt*, but acted as secretary to the Bishop during his stay in Iceland, and accompanied him to Copenhagen in 1745. The text agrees almost verbatim with that of 1644; and where any alterations have been made, we are informed, in a brief address to the reader, that they were introduced according to authority.

Being sold for a very reasonable price, the copies of this edition, 1000 in number, were brought within the reach of multitudes, who had never before been in possession of the words of eternal life. Still, however, there were many whose circumstances precluded them from all access to the treasure, and they must have continued in this state of exclusion had not the Lord raised up a Danish merchant, of the name of Laurence Stistrup, to commiserate their destitute situation. This gentleman formed the noble purpose of devoting the superfluous property of which he was possessed, to the distribution of the Holy Scriptures among his fellow-men. The sum originally appropriated, with this view, amounted to about 7000 specie dollars; but, owing to his zeal and good management, it was increased before his death to 13,000, for which he purchased shares in the Royal Bank of Copenhagen. The rights of these shares were, in virtue of his legacy, transferred

to the College of Missions; and the College have accordingly, ever since, made an annual purchase of about 560 copies of the Scriptures with the interest, which are distributed gratuitously in the different provinces of the Danish dominions. Mr Stistrup was no sooner apprised of the new edition of the Icelandic Bible, and the poverty of many of the Icelanders, than he purchased 596 copies of the whole Bible, and 1693 copies of the New Testament, and sent them over to be proportionally divided among the poorest inhabitants on the island.

The New Testament just mentioned was published by the same office, 1750, in octavo. The impression consisted of 2000 copies, which were sold at the moderate price of three marks each. From this period, to the close of the century, no attempts were made to multiply copies of the Scriptures in Iceland, though there was still ample room for exertion, as the existing copies bore but a small proportion to the population of the island.

In the first volume of the Transactions of the Icelandic Literary Society, published in 1781, is the commencement of a new translation of select passages of the prophets, by the learned Jon Olafsen, which is continued in the following volumes, to the sixty-second chapter of Isaiah. The translator was well versed in the Hebrew, and has constantly had the original before him when preparing his version, which, besides its merits as greatly superior to the common translations, is remarkable on account of its being the only Icelandic version done from the original Hebrew that has ever been printed. The common text is first inserted, below which follows that of Mr Olafsen, accompanied with a few critical notes, printed with a smaller type. The manner in which this specimen is executed, cannot but excite regret that the Icelandic church did not receive more extensive contributions, of a similar nature, from the biblical acquirements of the translator.*

A new version of the epistle to the Galatians by Dr Finnson, appeared in his periodical work, *Qvöld-vökurnar*, in the year 1794; but it borders too much on the paraphrastic, and is too much modernized to admit of its adoption into the public translation. Indeed the learned author appears to have been sensible of this, and states, in his preface to the volume, that it was merely designed for private edification.

* His Treatise de Baptismo, Havn. 1770, is justly held in the greatest estimation.

It was not to be supposed that, in the progress of those exertions, dictated by the laudable spirit of Christian zeal for which the last twenty years have been so eminently distinguished, the spiritual wants of the inhabitants of this remote island should be entirely forgotten. In the year 1800, a Society was formed by several pious clergymen in Fuhnen and Holstein, for the purpose of advancing the interests of true religion, by the distribution of small religious tracts, and as many copies of the Holy Scriptures as the limited nature of their funds would allow. Their attention was soon directed to Iceland; and having opened a correspondence with the Bishop, with the view of ascertaining the exact state of the island in respect to the Scriptures, they received the most authentic information, that copies of that blessed book could only be obtained with the utmost difficulty, and that if no measures were taken for procuring a supply, the copies would all be extinct in less than ten years. They were also informed, at the same time, that the printing-press, which had been removed from Holum, and attached to the Literary Society in the south, was no longer in order, and that the hope of the inhabitants was exclusively turned towards the benevolence of foreign Christians.* In consequence of this information, the Fuhnen Society immediately resolved to print 2000 copies of the Icelandic New Testament; but ere they had time to put their resolution into execution, my worthy fellow-labourer, the Rev. Mr Paterson, and I, were sent, in the providence of God, to Copenhagen; and having been made acquainted with the designs of the Society, as well as the population and wants of Iceland, we transmitted an account of these to a friend in London, by whom it was laid before the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Committee, with their usual liberality, requested that the proposed edition might be increased, at their expense, to 5000 copies; and the work was put to the press under the direction of Justiciary (now Etatsraad) Thorkelin, Privy Keeper of the Royal Archives in Copenhagen, and himself a native of Iceland.† The impression was finished in 1807, and the edition bears the following title:

* Third Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Appendix No. VII.

† Ibid. Append. No. VII. p. 133, 134.

That
Nya Testamente
Vors
Drottinns og Endur Lausnara
Jesu Christi
efter theirri annarì útgáfu thes à Islendsku.

Prentat i theim Konúnglega Haufutstad
Kaupmannahaúfn af Sebastian Popp
árum efter Guds Burd 1807.

i. e. "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, according to the second Icelandic edition. Printed at the Royal Capital, Copenhagen, by Sebastian Popp, the year after the birth of God 1807." On the 3000 copies intended for gratuitous distribution is printed: *Bok thessi a theim fátæka gefens at meddeilast og má allsengu verdi seliast.* "This book is given gratuitously to the poor, and must not be sold for any price." The rest were to be sold for four marks. It occupies 846 pages in octavo. In the preface, which is very brief, it is stated that the second edition of the book was made the foundation of the present impression; by which we are to understand, not the second edition of the Icelandic New Testament, which would be that published by Gudbrand, along with the Bible in 1584, but the text found in the second edition of the Icelandic Bible which had been reprinted in 1747 and 1750, and was, in fact, to be considered as the standard. A number of orthographical alterations were introduced, together with several new words and phrases, which appeared to the corrector of the press to be more eligible than those found in the former editions. For these latter innovations, however, he alone is accountable, as they were not only done without the knowledge of the Societies, at whose expense the edition was printed, but in opposition to one of the fundamental principles on which the British and Foreign Bible Society is established. It must be allowed, at the same time, that the alterations are of no great importance, and would not have been mentioned here, had it not been that they are disapproved of by the generality of the Icelanders, who are nevertheless thankful for the gift, and peruse it with assiduity and profit.

Of the impression, about 2000 copies were sent over to Iceland,

previous to the breaking out of hostilities between Great Britain and Denmark; 500 copies, which the committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society intended to be placed at the disposal of the Bishop of that island, were unexpectedly detained in Copenhagen, and providentially escaped the flames, which, during the bombardment, consumed the greatest part of the house in which they were deposited;* and owing to obstacles occasioned by the war, it was impossible to get any more copies dispatched from Copenhagen till 1812, when a considerable quantity was consigned to the care of the Archdeacon, and other individuals of respectability, who cordially interested themselves in their distribution. The remainder were sent over and brought into circulation in 1814 and 1815, and received by the inhabitants with every demonstration of gratitude and joy.

The Committee had it also in contemplation, to promote the printing of an edition of the Icelandic Bible; but their plan was interrupted by the intervention of hostilities, and it was not before the beginning of 1812 that it could be carried into effect. Yet even then the difficulties arising from the suspension of regular correspondence, threatened to put a stop to the progress of the work, so that the Committee were induced to request me to proceed to Copenhagen, in order to superintend its completion, and make the necessary arrangements for the binding and dispatching of the copies, when printed, to Iceland. His Danish Majesty having been graciously pleased to grant me permission to reside in that city, I repaired thither in the autumn of the above-mentioned year. The peculiar circumstances of the times still retarded the execution of the work, especially the impossibility of procuring an additional supply of paper from Sweden, whence the rest had been brought, and we were ultimately obliged to use a very inferior kind, to the no small deterioration of the typography. The impression was at length brought to a conclusion by the end of 1813. It consisted of 5000 copies, and assumed the following title:—

BIBLIA
Thad er
Aull heilaug Ritning
útlaugd á Islendsku

* Fourth Report, p. 170, 171.

og prentud
Epter theirri Kaupmannahaufnfsku Utgafu
MDCCXLVII
at forlagi
Thess Bretska og útlenda Felags
til útbreidslu Heilagrar Ritningar medal allra thioda,
KAUPMANNAHAUFN,
Are epter Burd vors Herra og endurlausnara Jesu
Christi MDCCCXIII
af C. F. Schubart; prentara thess Konunglega
Foreldralausu Barna Húss.

i. e. "The Bible, containing the whole of Sacred Scripture, translated into Icelandic, and printed according to the Copenhagen edition of 1747, at the expense of the British and Foreign Bible Society, for the distribution of the Holy Scriptures among all nations. Copenhagen, the year after the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ 1813, by C. F. Schubart, printer to the Royal Orphan-house." The New Testament, which, for the sake of expedition, was printed at the office of Thorstein Einarson Rangel, has the same title with that of the preceding edition. The Committee, desirous of rendering the supply as ample as possible, and knowing both the wants and the desire of the Icelanders to possess the Scriptures, resolved to have 5000 additional copies of the New Testament, struck off with the same types employed in printing that for the entire edition of the Bible, which was accordingly accomplished at the same time; and most of the copies were got ready for the spring ships, in which they were forwarded to the different harbours on the coasts of Iceland.

Towards the printing of this edition, £150 were contributed by the Edinburgh Bible Society; about £120 by Friends to the circulation of the Scriptures in Holstein; and 308 rix-dollars, 4 marks, by the Fuehnen Society for promoting the knowledge of Christianity. The rest of the expenses were defrayed by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

APPENDIX.

No. II.

POEM OF THANKS FROM ICELAND

TO THE

British and Foreign Bible Society,

BY

SIRA JON THORLAKSON,

OF BÆGISA,

The Translator of "Paradise Lost" into Icelandic Verse.

APPENDIX.

No. II.

POEM OF THANKS,

&c. &c.

TIL

THESS ENGELSKA BIBLIU FELAGS

FRA ISLENDINGUM.

Thu, Kristsverdugi felags flockur!
forskulldar meir en annar nockur
at nefnast thannig nu â öld!
Rödulskiær thinn sig reisti liomi
thâ riki myrkra Kristindomi
ögra let nærri komid qvölld.

Englanna kongur ut thig sendi:
Englar komnir frâ Drottins hendi
hans ther safnadar styrkid stund,
og honum smyried holla thegna;
hedanaf giörist Ydar vegna
England sannkallat Englaland.

Thâ vorir skiædu villu-fiendur,
vöktu Ritningar fottrodendur,
ther Englar, risud theim igegn;
i kiærleiks anda samansvarnir
sannleikans til ad efla varnir
ei huga spördud, aud ne megn.

Fâdæma-kiærleiks fegurd slika
frâ Ydur streyma ser eg lika
allt nordur hingat yfir mig
eyu thar himi, kend vid klaka
i köllduin mar, sem eins og iaka
i kringum Island sveigir sig.

Fætur engelskra fridarboda
fornar Postula brautir troda
utsendir likt um allann heim;
Siâ their hugprudu sannleiks vinir
sitt lif ei spara meir en hinir
einn til min kominn er uf theim.

Gudliga stiorn eg thâm thecki
thess sem eg dyrka, en se tho ecki;
min svo berliga minnist hann!
o skylda'g thannig uhrærd, sofa
is-köllduin fangin sinnis dofa
velgiörning eiga thacka thann.

Mammon og Judas mundu syta
mikil giald-spell, og thaug âlita
eins og ân tharfar utsoud
sem kostat hafid kiærleiks vegna
Krists til at smyria rikis thegna
og eingi reiknar utan Gud.

Melgd af Guds orda megin-hirdslum
mörg thusund-full af andar smyrslum
hvörvetna færast ker umkring;
heilög Ritning til lâlpar sâlum
i hvörskyns landa tungumâlum
utbytist frons um heilann hring.

Hvad mâ godgirni gudlig heita
gefins ef eigi slika ad veita
Guds helgidoma gnægd af aud,
og med giafverdi sumpart selia
svo at okeypis jafnt mâ telia
heiminum utdeilt himnabraud.

Er thvi iardneskum avinningi
ærit fiarstædt, at hertil thvingi
ydar himinlynd hiörtu sa;
helldur thusundfaldt honum ædra
heidur Drottins og velferd bræðra
vakti med Ydur verkun thá

Hâleitt felag! til heidurs Gudi
helgat, og frama Krists söfnudi!
gott verk hefir thu giört â mer!
thess skal eg iafnan vottur vera,
og verdug heidursteikn frambera
tharum, eins fyrir Hæd og her.

Tho hraustir kappar hrosi sigri
hrak er âmoti tignarligri
gudræknis athöfn thinni thad;
hennar not, laun og heidur vara
heims yfir serhvörn maktarskara
her og â ödrum hærra stad.

I minu nafni og minna barna
med thessum ordum vel eg giarna
Thacklæti giallda ther og pris;
o! at ver mættum eins vel niota
till allra heilla og sâlarbota
thinnar giâfar, sem thu oss kys!

Öldrud kona med falldi og feldi
fann hvitum, undir Nordra Veldi,
Bardarsey, stirdann gel eg od!
Opt thad sem minir kundar qvâdu
konnungar fordum milldir thâdu
thiggid og, Fedur, thessi liod.

Engla Iöfur, sem himni og heimi
med hâtign styrir, Ydur geimi!
Hanns blessun Ydur stydie sterk!
Su er min osk af heitu hiarta
her og sidar at meigi skarta
umbun Hanns god fyrir Ydar verk.

Pann 10da Julii, 1815.

Societati Biblicae Anglorum

ISLANDIA.*

Tu, Christo digna Societas,
Meres, præ alia quavis
Tale nomen, in nostris diebus;
Tuum jubar, solari non cedens,
Ortum vidimus, quum tenebrarum imperium
Christianismo noctem ruentem intentavit.

Rex Ang(e)lorum te delegavit;
Angeli a Dei latere,
Vos ejus civitatis statum firmatis,
Et ipsi fidelcs subditos ungitis;
Dehinc Anglia ob vestram causam
Ang(e)lorum terra merito vocabitur.

Quum hæretici, nocivi nostri hostes,
Excitarunt scripturæ calcatores,
Vos Angli contra eos surrexistis,
In spiritu caritatis conjurati,
Ad veri defensionem instituendam,
Non animo, nec divitiis, nec viribus, pepercistis.

* Translated by the learned Professor Finn Magnusson.

Rarissimum talem caritatis splendorem
Ego etiam a te effundi cerno
In me boreali vicinam polo,
Insulam a glacie nomen trahentem,
Quæ, nivis concretæ cumulo similis,
Frigidæ zonæ cingor oceano.

Pedes Anglorum, pacis nuntiorum,
Apostolorum prisca vestigia calcant,
Simili modo per totum mundum emissi;
Ecce! cordati ii veritatis amici
Non minus illis propriæ parcunt vitæ;
Unus eorum me jam visitavit.

In ea re recognosco regimen
Ejus quem colo, sed non video;
Tam aperte mei memor est!
Num, sic attacta, dormiero,
Perfrigido mentis torpore capta;
Pro tanto beneficio gratias non egero!

Mammon vel Judas sane lugerent
Magnas impensas, censentes
Sine ulla necessitate profusas,
Illas, quas vos, caritate commoti,
Erogastis in Christianorum unctionem
Et quas nemo, Deo excepto, computavit.

Larga copia e divini verbi thesauris,
Vasa unguentorum spiritualium multoties mille,
Circumferuntur ubicunque;
Sacra scriptura, regionis cujusvis
Idiomati reddita, in animarum salutem,
Distribuitur per totum terrarum orbem.

Quid meret nomen divinæ benevolentiæ,
Si non gratuita præbitio
Sacrarum Dei divitiarum,
Atque venditio æquissima,
Ut donis adnumerari posset
Panis cœlestis mundo distributus!

Nullum terrestre lucrum
Ad hoc vestra cœlestia
Pectora cogit;
Sed illo millies sublimior
Domini veneratio, atque fratrum salus,
Officium tale vobis indixerunt.

Illustris Societas divino honori
Ac Christiani cœtus refectioni sacrata,
Perutilem mihi operam dedisti;
Semper hujus rei testis ero,
Ac ejus honorifica signa
Et cœlo et terræ exhibebo.

Fortium ducum triumphi
Cedunt tuo inclyto
Pietatis exercitio;
Ejus merces et honos
Mundanæ cunctæ gloriæ prævalebunt,
Hic et in summo cœlo.

Meò et liberorum nomine,
His verbis cupio tibi
Gratias et laudes solvere;
Utinam tuo dono fruamur
In omnifariam salutem,
Ex tuo voto!

Annosa, peplo et palla
Amicta candide sub Borcæ regno,
Rigidam cano cantionem Thule;
Sæpe meorum gnatorum odas
Clementes olim accepere Reges,
Vos etiam hocce, Patres! accipite carmen.

Angelorum princeps, qui cælum et solum
Summus gubernat, vos ille servet!
Ipsius valida benedictio vos suffulciat!
Opto fervido corde
Quod in æternum ejus remuneratio
Opera vestra bene decoret!

VI. ID. JUL. A. S. MDCCCXV.

OBSERVATIO TRANSLATORIS

AD STROPHAM SECUNDAM.

Vox *Englar*, vel *Einglar* linguâ Islandicâ et Anglos e Angelos significat.

ICELAND

TO THE

British and Foreign Bible Society.

IMITATED IN ENGLISH.

Society of Christ! whose fame
The world shall raise o'er thy compeers—
Thou most deserving of such name
Or in the past or present years—
Thy beam has shone, more lovely bright
Than solar blaze, or lunar ray—
Has shone, when all around was night,
And bade the darkness pass away.

When they, our unbelieving foes,
Would crush the hopes they could not feel,
You, Sons of England, then arose,
With hearts all love, and hands all zeal;
You, bound by Charity's bless'd tie,
And fearless in defence of truth,
Spent in our aid unsparingly
Riches and power—and age and youth.

And what! though near the Arctic pole,
And, like a heap of drifted snow,
The chilling north winds round me roll,
The land of ice—call'd rightly so—
Tho' circled by the frigid zone,
An island in a frozen sea;
Yet I this charity have known,
This Christian zeal has glow'd for me!

For see—the Messengers of Peace—
From Albion new Apostles come:
They, like the old, shall never cease
To quit their kin and their home.
Like them with cares wide unfurl'd,
Careless of life, they tempt the gale,
And seek the limits of the world—
Ye friends to God and Iceland, hail!

One visits me—thou Great First Cause
Enthron'd in majesty above;
'Tis here I recognise thy laws,
And feel how mindful is thy love.
And shall I, when thou deign'st to bless
Forgetful sleep the years away;
And, sunk in torpid listlessness,
Nor strike the lyre, nor raise the lay?

Th' unfeeling heart, the sordid hand,
Would mourn, perchance, the vast expense,
With which on earth's remotest land
You spread the gifts of Providence.
The treasures of the Word sublime
Go forth, where'er your banners wave;
In every language, ev'ry clime,
The mind to form, the soul to save.

What then can merit more of praise,
The mortal and immortal crown,
What better shall your honours raise,
And call the tide of blessings down,
Than pouring through this world of strife
The healing balm of sacred lore;
And minist'ring that bread of life,
Which, tasted once, man wants no more?

Yet, what your ardent breasts could lead
These gifts to spread, these toils to dare?
Could hopes of gain impel the deed?
Could thoughts of avarice be there?
No:—'twas the love of Him on high
The safety of the p[illegible] on earth;
Hence rose your Sun of Charity,
Hence has your Star of Glory birth.

Society of Christ! most dear
To Heaven, to virtue, and to me!
For ever lives thy memory here:
While Iceland is—thy fame shall be.
The triumphs of the great and brave,
The trophies of the conquer'd field—
These cannot bloom beyond the grave,
To thee their honours all shall yield.

Thy fame, far more than earth can give,
Shall soar with daring wing sublime;
And wide, and still more wide, survive
The crush of worlds, the wreck of time.
Thus Thule and her sons employ
Their harps to pour the grateful song:
And long thy gifts may we enjoy,
And pour this grateful tribute long.

Aged and clad in snow-white pall,
I twine the wreath, and twine for thee;
Tho' mingled howls, in Thule's hall,
The north wind with our minstrelsy.
These strains—tho' rigid as the clime,
Rude as the rocks—oh! scorn not thou!
These strains, in Thule's elder time,
Kings have receiv'd—receive them now.

Yet, not the harp, and not the lay,
Can give the praise and blessing due;
May He, whom Heav'n and Earth obey,
Ye CHRISTIAN FATHERS, prosper you!
May He—if prav'rs can aught avail—
No joys in life or death deny;
Crown you with fame that shall not fail
With happiness that cannot die!

APPENDIX

No. III

AN INQUIRY

INTO

THE ORIGIN, PROGRESS, NATURE, AND CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF

ICELANDIC POETRY.

APPENDIX.

No. III.

ICELANDIC POETRY.

Of all the liberal arts, none can lay claim to a more remote antiquity, or boast of a more extensive diffusion, than poetry. Through all the different gradations of mental culture, from the lowest state of uncivilized humanity to the highest degree of refinement, the power of its charms has been felt, and its multifarious utility acknowledged. The shepherd and the husbandman, the legislator and the prophet, the sage, the lover, and the warrior, have, each in his respective station, cultivated the poetic talent, and either converted it into a means of present amusement, consolation, or instruction, or employed it as a vehicle for transmitting the memory of past events to posterity.

The general principles of poetry, like the grand outlines of the human character, are the same among all nations; nevertheless each people display in their poetical compositions, certain peculiar traits and properties, arising from the genius and laws of their language, the nature of their religion, their political and domestic circumstances, manners, and customs, which so completely distinguish these compositions from the productions of other nations, as justly to entitle them to the character of an original and independent national poetry. Thus the poetry of the Hebrews differs from that of the Greeks; the Latin, though more consonant with the latter, from both; and the numerous versified productions of the northern and western European nations from each other.

Though they unquestionably possess much in common, and have, in more instances than one, reciprocated with each other, yet their respective poetry retains a discriminating garb, which may easily be recognised, even by strangers, but is still more perceptible by the native eye.

It has generally been agreed among the learned, that the ancient inhabitants of Scandinavia were, and that the Icelanders still are, possessed of a peculiar and underived national poetry. While the bards and minstrels occupied a conspicuous place in the more westerly regions of Europe, the north exhibited its Skalds: an order of men who were poets by profession, whose names have been enrolled in the annals of fame, and who have left behind them ample specimens of their poetic skill. In the Edda, the Heimskringla, the edited and manuscript Sagas, besides a multiplicity of more recent examples of versification, we possess almost innumerable monuments of northern prosody, all of which bear the most unequivocal marks of independent origin, and well merit the attention of such as wish to become acquainted with the diversified productions of the human intellect, or the peculiar features which it assumes under different circumstances.

Accustomed, indeed, as we are, from our school years, to hear the Roman historians expatiating on the barbarism and ferocity of the northern nations, and taught to regard the terms "Goth" and "Gothic," as synonymous with savage and barbarous, we naturally deem it in a high degree paradoxical to assert, that those very nations, whose furious ravages extinguished the poor remains of expiring genius among the Romans, should cherish the art of poetry with all possible care among their own countrymen; * but not to insist on events of a retent date, still more irreconcilable with the boasted illumination and refinement of the age, it must not be forgotten, that effeminacy and excessive politeness are even more hostile to some of the principal beauties of poetry—enthusiasm, boldness, and sublimity, than the fierce and martial spirit which generally characterizes the ruder and more ancient stages of society.

In examining the ancient prosody of the north, it is necessary that we divest ourselves of local and educational prejudices, and abandon, as it were, our own ideas of poetic taste; that we make every allowance for the distinctive genius of the language.

* Preface to five pieces of Runic poetry, London, 1763, 8vo.

place ourselves in the circumstances of the poet, and by familiarizing ourselves with his religion, manners, customs, and, in short, his entire range of objects, that we be prepared for taking, not a partial and superficial, but a liberal, penetrating, and extensive view of the whole.

The principal nations of Scandinavia being descended from the Goths or Getæ, who had their seat in the vicinity of the Black Sea, it follows, by consequence, that their poetry is to be traced to the same source. Not that we are able, at the distance of time, to determine its original characters, as it existed among that people, or mark its progress during the subsequent peregrinations of their offspring across the vast regions of Russia and Germany: the storms of ages have obliterated the tract, and all we have to assist us in our inquiry is the guidance of a few scanty and insulated monuments, the inscriptions of which rather leave us to draw inferences, than furnish us with clear and particular directions. The testimony of Herodotus * and other ancient authors in favour of the wisdom of the *Scythians*, a general name given by the Greek historians to the northern nations, might of itself warrant the conclusion, that the art of poetry was cultivated by that people; for we know, that among the Greeks, a wise man and a poet were often synonymous terms. Ælian, in the second book of his treatise on the nature of animals, describing the *hyperboreans*, expressly states, that they were addicted to poetry; † and we are informed by Quintus Curtius, that when Alexander sentenced to death for a revolt some of the Sogdians, a people who lived between the Caspian and Black Seas, they were filled with joy to that degree that they *sung* and danced; and when asked by the king, what was the cause of this frantic and untimely joy? they replied, that as they were soon to be restored to their ancestors by so great a conqueror, they could not help celebrating so honourable a death, which was the wish of all brave men, in *their own accustomed songs*. ‡ It is impossible for any one, who is at all acquainted with the sanguinary religion of Odin, or who has perused the death-song of Regner Lodbrok, not to be sensible of the palpable coincidence between the spirit of this passage, and that con-

* In Melpom. lib. iv.

† Ανθρωπων ὑπερβορεων γενος και τιμας Απολλιονος εκειθι αδουσι μεν και ποιηται ... υσι δε και σ ... γραφεις.

‡ See Wharton's Dissert. I. to his History of English Poetry.

tempt of death, combined with the anticipation of warlike exploits in a future state, which characterized the ancient inhabitants of Scandinavia.

Jornandes, himself a bishop of the Goths, under the reign of the emperor Justinian, declares, in his book *De Rebus Geticis*, that the recital of ancient historical poems was common among his countrymen,* a custom which is still kept up by the Icelanders; and he states in another place, that the exploits of their ancestors were sung to the harp in the presence of the most distinguished families.† There is also in the 11th chapter a passage, where he speaks of the changes introduced by Diceneus being kept in memory even in his day, through the medium of songs; and from what he says respecting the origin and genealogies of the Goths, in connection with their fables, it is evident he had in view something very analogous to the fables in the prosaic Edda.‡ Priscus, in his *Hist. Goth.* relates, that in the time of Attila, king of the Huns, two Scythians presented themselves before the Monarch one evening, and recited certain verses which they had composed in commemoration of his victories and military achievements; when, the eyes of the guests being turned towards them, some were delighted with the structure of the verses; some had their minds roused by the recollection of battles they had fought; while others shed tears at the thought, that old age had come upon them, completely damping their military ardour, and rendering their bodies unfit for engaging in war.§ The Marcomanns, too, who sprang from the same stock, long retained their heathen rites, and recorded with peculiar characters (probably *runes*) their *songs*, enchantments, and divinations.‖ That the Goths had a regular poetry in the days of Ovid, and that he learned its rules during his residence among that people, is manifest from the poem he afterwards wrote in honour of Augustus. His words are,

> Nec te mirare si sint vitiosa decebit
> Carmina, quæ faciam pene poëta Getes.
> Ah pudet! et getico scripsi sermone libellum,
> Structaque sunt nostris barbara verba modis.
> Et placui, gratare mihi, coepique poëta
> Inter inhumanos nomen habere Getas.¶

* Cap. iv. † Cap. v. ‡ Cap. xv. § P.
‖ Biorneri Antiq. Hyperbor. p. 67. ¶ Ovid de Ponto, lib.

Of the early use of poetry among the Danes, we are furnished with the strongest proofs, in the ancient Anglo-Saxon poem, describing the affairs of that people in the third and fourth centuries, which has lately been published by my learned friend Etatsraad Thorkelin.* Depicting the customs of one of the northern courts, the author of the poem exhibits something strikingly analogous to the matter of the ancient Edduic poetry:

Thær was hearpan
Sweg swutol sang
Scopes sægde
Se the cuthe
Frum sceaft fira
Feorran reccan
Cwæth thæt se Almightiga
Eorthan worh, &c. p. 9.

"*There they played on the harp, and sang delightful songs; and the poets repeated what they knew of the origin of the human race, derived from afar—the creation of the earth by the Almighty,*" &c.

We are also told, p. 80, that at their convivial feasts,

Scop hwilum sang.

"*Meanwhile the poet sang.*"

And again, p. 67,

Hwilum cynninges thegn
Guma gilp hlæden
Gidda gemyndig
Se the eal fela
Eald gesegena
Worn gemunde.
Word other fand
So the gebunden
Secg eft ongan
Sith Beowulfes
Snyttrum styrian
And on sped wrecan
Spel gerade
Wordum wrixlan
Wel hwelc gecwæth
Thæt he framsige
Munde secgan
Hyrde ellen dæthum
Uncuthes fela
Wæl singes gewin
Wide sithas
Thara the gumena bearn
Gearwe ne wiston.

"*In the mean time the royal servant* (the poet) *commemorated in songs the virtues of such as had fallen in battle—he who retains in his memory all the traditions of past ages. One word produced another, and, when joined together, they formed a history of the voyage of Beowulf. It was sagely composed, and easy of interpretation, because the events followed each other in historical order. What he thus masterly composed, he repeated to such as were present. I heard noble deeds set forth in elegant poems; things which had never before been known to the children of men.*"

* De Danorum Rebus Gestis, Secul iii. and iv. Poëma Danicum Dialecto Anglo-Saxonica Ex Bibliotheca Cottoniana Musaei Britannici, edidit versione lat. et indicibus auxit Grim. Johnson Thorkelin, Dr J. V. &c. &c. Havniæ 1815, 4to.

These testimonies not only prove the esteem in which the poetic art was held by those nations which have from time to time emigrated into the north of Europe, but, taken in connection with the fact, that so many ancient poetical monuments have been preserved by the Scandinavians, they place it beyond a doubt, that their ancestors were passionately fond of song, and employed it as a medium for the transmission of their genealogical and historical knowledge to posterity. Anterior to the introduction of writing, it was only by means of verse that the exact memory of past events could be preserved. Oral traditions in prose neither excite that interest, nor make the same impression on the imagination and memory, which inseparably attend the recital of poetical compositions; consequently, such traditions are greatly liable to corruption, and even to be entirely forgotten. The advantages of measured language, on the other hand, its abruptness, imagery, and musical sounds, are all calculated to rouse and keep alive the intellectual powers, while the rythmical assonances prove an infallible safeguard against either addition or omission.

The most ancient records which have been handed down to us by the Scandinavians, perfectly agree with the foreign testimonies that have just been produced, in referring the poetry of that people to a remote antiquity. Like the Greeks, the northern nations attributed their poetry to a divine origin. It was their belief, that Odin and his followers were the inventors of runes and songs, on which account they obtained the name of *Lióda-smidir*, or modellers of songs. To this purpose are the words of Snorro Sturluson, when treating of the arts and abilities of Odin: "All these arts he taught others by means of runes and magic, which procured for the gods the appellation of the fabricators of magic songs." * To shew how Odin came by this gift, is the object of the following fiction in the dialogues of Bragur, which form part of the prosaic Edda: "The Asas, or gods, formed a man called *Qúasir*, who was so clever, that no question could be proposed which he was not able to resolve: he traversed the whole world, teaching mankind wisdom. But his merits exciting envy, two dwarfs treacherously slew him; and receiving his blood into a vessel, mixed it up with honey, and thence composed a liquor, which renders all those that drink of it good poets. The gods missing their son, inquired of the dwarfs what was become

* Ynglinga Saga, cap. 7.

him. The dwarfs, to extricate themselves out of the difficulty, replied, that Quâsir had died, suffocated with his knowledge, because he could not meet with persons to ease and disembogue his mind to, by proposing to him so many learned questions as was necessary to his relief. But their perfidy was afterwards discovered by an unexpected accident. These dwarfs having drawn upon themselves the resentment of a certain giant, he seized and exposed them upon a rock, surrounded on all sides by the sea. In this frightful situation, their only recourse was to purchase their deliverance at the price of that glorious beverage. The giant being satisfied with this ransom, carried it home, and delivered it to the custody of his daughter Gunlöd.

"This valuable acquisition was eagerly sought after by the gods, but very difficult to obtain, because it was concealed under rocks. Odin was nevertheless determined to try for it, and he made the attempt in the following manner. Transforming himself into a worm, he glided through a crevice into the cavern where the beverage was kept. Then resuming his natural shape, and gaining the heart of Gunlöd, he prevailed on her to let him drink three draughts of the liquor entrusted to her care. But the crafty deity, resolving to make the most of his advantage, pulled so deep, that at the last draught he left none behind him in the vessel; and, transforming himself into an eagle, flew away to Asgard, to deposit in safety the precious treasure he had obtained.

"The giant, who was a magician, instantly discovered the artifice that had been practised, and changing himself also into an eagle, flew with all speed after Odin, who had almost reached the gates of Asgard. Then the gods all ran out of their places to assist and support their master; and, foreseeing that he would have much difficulty to secure the liquor, without exposing himself to the danger of being taken, they immediately set out all the vessels they could lay their hands on. In effect, Odin finding he could not escape but by easing himself of the burden which retarded his flight, instantly filled all the pitchers with this miraculous liquor; and from hence it hath been distributed among both gods and men. But in the hurry and confusion in which the liquor was discharged, the bulk of mankind were not aware, that Odin only threw up part of it through his beak; the rest was emitted through a more impure vent. And as it is only the

former liquor that this god gives as a beverage to the good poets —to such as he would animate with a divine inspiration; so it is only the latter sort that falls to the share of bad rhymers; for as this flowed from its inferior source in greater abundance, the gods bestow it in liberal draughts on all that will apply. This makes the crowd very great about the vessels, and this is the reason why the world is overwhelmed with such a redundance of wretched verses."*

That poets were supposed to derive their genius from Odin, who imparted it to his favourites, is evident from Gautreks-saga, where he is introduced as saying: "I will endow him with the poetic art, so that he shall be able to compose poems with the same facility with which he can speak." On this account poetry came, in after times, to be denominated *asa-mâl*, or the language of the gods. And even after the introduction of Christianity into the north, we find the poet Alfred celebrating the merits of Odin and his progeny on account of their cultivation of this art.

Öll hefir âtt til hylli	*The composition of popular songs*
Odins skipat liodum	*has at all times distinguished the race*
Allgillda manc alldar	*of Odin: The invaluable works of our*
Idio varra nidia.	*ancestors are still fresh in my memory.*
Emc traudr thvi vel vidris	*But I dare say no more; for, how fa-*
Valld hugnadiz skâldi	*vourable soever the power of Odin was*
Legg ec â frumver friggiar	*to the poet, I must hate the husband of*
Fion er kristi thionum. †	*Frygg, because we now serve Christ.*

To judge from the prosodiacal parts of the Edda, the more original mode in which the Scandinavians communicated their poetical productions was in company, by rehearsing them for the instruction and gratification of the hearers, or by the extemporaneous solution of enigmas and questions of ancient wisdom. When any stranger lodged a night with a family, his wisdom was generally tried in this way. Thus Vafthrudnir declares to Gangrâd, when he desires him to take a seat:

Thâ skal freista	*Now we shall try*
Hvar fleira viti	*Who knows most,*
Gestr, etha inn gamli thulr.	*The guest, or the aged speaker.*

* The above is taken almost verbatim from Mallet, vol. ii. p. 18[illegible]

† Olafsen om Nordens gamle Digtekonst, p. 3.

Aged people, who had treasured up in their memory a rich fund of traditionary relations, were regarded as under a kind of obligation to repeat them on special occasions, that they might be learned by the young, and thus be transmitted to future generations. These traditions, to which the Icelanders gave the name of Sagas, were generally interwoven with long pieces of poetry, which the recitor had to sing, and which gave greater life and interest to the story. In this way has the knowledge of the most ancient poems been perpetuated among the Gothic tribes; and many of them have survived the ravages of time, and reached our days in a garb, which is of itself a strong internal proof of their being genuine. The most valuable of these are the different odes, chiefly of mythological import, which compose the greater part of Sæmund's Edda, and which it is only necessary to read in the original Icelandic, in order to be convinced of their high antiquity. Yet these are, in all probability, only a few remains of the ancient poetry, which the Scandinavians had transplanted from their original seat within the western confines of Asia, but which was new-modelled from time to time, according to the changes which crept into their vernacular language, and to which also their manners and customs were in a certain degree naturally subjected.

These poems, as well as those which have been furnished us by the ages immediately preceding the reign of Harald Harfagra, are remarkable for their simplicity, the natural order in which the words follow each other, and their freedom from the obscure and far-fetched images and poetical synonymes which afterwards characterized the northern muse. They are all of the kind of verse called *Fornyrdalag*, or the versification of antiquity, and appear to have been composed without any farther study than what regarded the alliteration. They contain, indeed, passages which, at this distance of time, it is difficult, if not impossible, satisfactorily to explain; but this is to be ascribed to our limited acquaintance with certain mythological allusions, and the objects the poet had in his eye—a veil which, to a greater or less extent, is drawn over all the works of antiquity. These, however, are merely insulated passages, and bear no proportion to the rest of the compositions, which, taken as a whole, possess a simplicity, and not unfrequently a sublimity, that may justly be said to vie with the effusions of more polished bards.

As a specimen of this kind of poetical composition, I shall here select some stanzas of the *Völuspâ*, or the "Oracle of the Prophetess Vola." It has justly been considered as the most important part of the Edda, containing an epitome of the Scandinavian mythology, and serving as a text on which the rest of that work is a comment.* The argument of the poem I shall give in the words of Mallet. †—The Prophetess having imposed silence on all intellectual beings, declares, that she is going to reveal the decrees of the Father of Nature, the actions and operations of the gods, which no person ever knew before herself. She then begins with a description of the chaos; and proceeds to the formation of the world, and of that of its various species of inhabitants, giants, men, and dwarfs. She then explains the employments of the fairies, or destinies; the functions of the gods; their most remarkable adventures; their quarrels with Loke; and the vengeance that ensued. At last she concludes with a long description of the final state of the universe, its dissolution, and conflagration; the battle of the inferior deities and the evil beings; the renovation of the world; the happy lot of the good, and the punishment of the wicked.—The text is taken from the edition of the Edda just published in Stockholm.

Hljoths bith ek allar
helgar kindir,
meiri ok minni
mavgo Heimthallar;
vildo' at ek Valfavthur
ved framteljak,
fornspjöll fira
thau ek fremst of-nam.

Give silence all
Ye sacred race,
Both great and small
Of Heimdal sprung:
Vol-father's deeds
I will relate,
The ancient tales
Which first I learned.

Ek man jötna
ár of borna,
thá er forthom
mik frœdda höftho:
nio man ek heima,
nio ivithi,
mjotvith mœran
fyrir mold nethan.

I know giants
Early born:
My ancestors
Of former times:
Nine worlds I know,
With their nine poles
Of tender wood
Beneath the earth.

Ar var alda
thâ Ymir bygthi,

In early times,
When Ymir lived,

* Vol. II. Introduct. p. 27.

† Ibid. p. 204.

var-a sandr, ne sær,
ne svalar unnir;
jörth fanz æva,
ne upphimin,
gap var Ginnunga,
en gras hvergi.

Was sand, nor sea,
Nor cooling wave;
No earth was found,
Nor heaven above;
One chaos all,
And nowhere grass.

Athr Börs synir
bjöthum yptho,
their er Mithgarth
moeran skopo.
Sol skein sunnan
á Salar steina,
thá var grund groin
groenum lauki.

Until Bör's sons
Th' expanse did raise,
By whom Midgard
The great wa[illegible]made.
From th' south the sun
Shone on the walls,
Then did the earth
Green herbs produce.

Sol varp sunnan
sinni Mána,
hendi hinni hoegri
á himin jodyr
Sol that ne visse
hvar hon sali átti,
Stjörnor that ne vissi
hvar thær stathi átto,
Máni that ne vissi
hvat hann megins átti.

The sun turned south,
The moon did shine;
Her right hand held
The horse of heaven.
The sun knew not
His proper sphere;
The stars knew not
Their proper place;
The moon knew not
Her proper power.

Thá gèngo regin avll
á raukstola,
ginnheilög goth,
ok um that gettuz:
not ok nithjom
nöfn umgáfn;
myrgin heto
ok mithjan dag,
undorn ok aptan,
ár-of at telja.

Then all the powers
Went to the throne,
The holy gods,
And held consult:
Night and cock-crowing,
Their names they gave
Morning also,
And noon-day tide,
And afternoon
The years to tell.

Hittoz Æsir
á Ithavelli
their er havrg ok hof
há-timbrotho,
afla lavgtho,
auth smithotho,
alls kostotho,
alls freistutho,
tángir skopo
ok tol giörtho.

The Asas met
On Ida's plains,
Who altars raised
And temples built;
Anvils they laid,
And money coined;
Their strength they tried
In various ways,
When making songs,
And forming tools.

Tefldo i tuni,	*On th' green they played*
teitir vàro,	*In joyful mood,*
var theim vettugis	*Nor knew at all*
vant or gulli ;	*The want of gold,*
unz thriár komo,	*Until there came*
thursa meyar,	*Three Thursa maids,*
ámátkar miök,	*Exceeding strong,*
ur Jotunheimum.	*From Jotunheim.*
* * *	* * *
Unz thrir komo	*Until there came*
ár thvi lithi,	*Out of the ranks,*
avflgir ok ástgir	*Powerful and fair,*
Æsir, at husi ;	*Three Asas home,*
fundo á landi	*And found on shore*
litt megandi	*In helpless plight,*
Ask ok Embio,	*Ask and Embla*
avrlavglausa.	*Without their fate.*
Avnd thau ne átto,	*They had not yet*
oth thau ne havftho,	*Spirit or mind,*
lá ne læti,	*Blood, or beauty,*
ne lita gotha :	*Or lovely hue.*
avnd gaf Othin,	*Odin gave spirit,*
oth gaf Hoenir,	*Heinir gave mind,*
lá gaf Lothur	*Lothur gave blood*
ok litu gotha.	*And lovely hue.*
* * *	* * *
Ask veit ek standa	*I know an ash,*
heitir Ygg-drasill,	*Named* Ygg-drasill,
nar-bathmr ausinn	*A stately tree,*
hvita auri :	*With white dust strew'd.*
thathan koma döggvar,	*Thence come the dews*
thærs i dalla falla,	*That wet the dales ;*
stendr ey yfir groenn	*It stands aye green*
Urthar brunni.	*O'er Urda's well.*
Thathan koma meyjar	*Thence come the maids*
margs vitandi,	*Who much do know ;*
thrjár ur theim sal,	*Three from the hall*
er und tholli stendr :	*Beneath the tree ;*
Urth hetu eina,	*One they nam'd Was,*
athra Yerthandi,	*And* Being *next,*
skáro á skithi	*The third,* Shall be,
Skuld hina thrithju.	*On the shield they cut.*
* * *	* * *
Ein sat hon uti	*She sat without*
thá hinn aldni kom	*When th' Ancient came,*

Yggjongr Asa,
ok i augo leit:

The awful god,
And viewed his eye.

Hvers fregnit mik?
hvi freistith min?
allt veit ek Othinn,
hvar thu auga falt thitt;
i inom mocra
Mimis brunni;
dreckr mjöth Mimir
myrginn hverjan
af vethi Valfavthurs;
vitoth enn, etha hvat?

What ask ye me?
Why tempt ye me?
Full well I know,
Great Odin, where
Thine eye thou lost;
In Mimi's well,
The fountain pure
Mead Mimir drinks
Each morning new
With Odin's pledge.
Conceive ye this?

Valdi henni Herfavthui
bringa ok men;
— — — —
— — — —
fèspjöll spaklig
ok spá ganda;
sà hon vitt ok om vitt
of veravld hverja.

To her the god
Of battles gave
Both costly rings
And shining gold;
The art of wealth
And witchcraft wise,
By which she saw
Through ev'ry world.

Sá hon walkyrjor,
vitt um-komnar,
gavrfar at ritha
til Goth thjódar;
Skuld hèlt skildi
en Skavgul önnur,
Gunnr, Hildr, Gavndul,
ok Geir-skavgul.
Nú ero talthar
nonnor Herjans,
gavrfar at ritha
grund valkyrjor.

She saw Valkyrics
Come from afar,
Ready to ride
To th' tribes of god;
Skuld held the shield,
Skaugul came next,
Gunnr, Hildr, Gaundul,
And Geir-skaugul.
Thus now are told
The Warrior's Norns,
Ready to ride
The Valkyries.

Heithi hana hèto
hvars til húsa kom,
ok vavlu velspá,
vitti hon ganda,
seith hon kunni,
seithi hon leikin;
æ var hon ángan
illrar brúthar.

Heith *she was nam'd*
Where'er she came;
The prophetess
Of cunning arts.
She knew right well
Bad luck to seethe,
And mischief was
Her only sport.

That man hon fólkvig

She murder saw,

fyrst í heimi,
er Gullveigo
geirom studdo;
ok í höll Hárs
hana brendo;
thrisvar brendo
thrisvar borna,
opt, ósialdan,
thó hon enn lifir.

The first that e'er
Was in the world,
When Gullveig was
Placed on the spear.
When in Har's hall
They did her burn:
Thrice she was burnt,
Thrice she was born,
Oft, not seldom,
And yet she lives.

Thá gèngo regin avll
á ravkstóla,
ginnheilög goth
ok um that gettuz:
hvârt skyldo æsir
afráth gialda,
etha skyldo gothin avll
gildi eiga?

When all the powers
Went to the throne,
The holy gods,
And held consult:
What punishment
They should inflict
On th' Asas now
For bad advice.
Or whether all
The gods should hold
Convivial feasts.

Brottin var borgveggr
borgar ása;
knáttu Vanir víg-spá
vanlo sporna;
fleygthi Othinn
ok í fólk um-skaut,
that var enn fólk-víg
syrst í heimi.

Were broken now
The castle-walls
Of Asaborg,
By murd'rous Vanes
Who took the field.
Forthe Odin flew
And shot around:
This murder was
The first that e'er
Was in the world.

Thá gèngo regin avll
á ravkstóla,
ginnheilög goth,
ok um that gettuz:
hver hefthi lopt allt
lævi blandit,
ethr ætt jötuns
Oths mey gefna?

When all the powers
Went to the throne,
The holy gods
And held consult:
Who had the air
Involved in flames,
Or Odder's maid
To giants given.

Thór einn thar var
thrúnginn móthi;
hann sjaldan sitr,
er hann slíkt of-fregn;

There Thor alone
Was in ill mood,
He seldom sits
When told th

á gèngoz eithar,
orth ok særi,
mál avll meginlig,
er á methal fóro.

Broken were oaths
And promises,
And all contracts
That had been made.

Veit hon Heimthallar
horn um-fólgit
und heithvonum
helgom bathmi:
á ser hon ausaz
aurgom forsi,
af vethi Valfavthurs:
vitoth enn, etha hvat?

She knows where hid
Lies Heimdal's horn,
Full deep beneath
The sacred tree.
She sees a flood
Rush down the fall
From Odin's pledge,
Conceive ye yet?

Sól tekr sortna;
sigr fold í mar:
hverfa af himni
heithar stiörnur;
geisar eimi
vith aldur-nara;
leir hár hiti
vith himin sjálfan.

The sun is pale;
The spacious earth
The sea engulphs;
From heaven fall
The lucid stars:
At the end of time
The vapours rage,
And playful flames
Involve the skies.

Sèr hon uppkoma
avthru sinni
jörth or ægi
ithia grœna:
falla forsar,
flygr avrn yfir,
sá er á fialli
fiska veithir

She sees arise
The second time
From th' sea, the earth
Completely green:
Cascades do fall,
The eagle soars
That on the hills
Pursues his prey.

Hittaz Æsir
á Ithavelli,
ok um mold-thinur
mátkar doema:
ok minnaz thar
á megin dóma;
ok á fimbul-tys
fornar rúnar.

The gods convene
On Ida's plains,
And talk of man
The worm of dust.
They call to mind
Their former might,
And th' ancient runes
Of Fimbultyr.

Muno ósánir
akrar vaxa;
böls mán alls batna,
Baldur mon koma;
búa their Havthr

The fields unsown
Shall yield their growth
All ills shall cease;
Balder shall come,
And dwell with Hauthr

Hropts sigtóptir,	*In Hropt's abodes.*
ve valtíva:	*Say, warrior-gods,*
vitoth enn, etha hvat?	*Conceive ye yet?*
Sal sèr hon standa	*A hall she sees*
sólo fegra,	*Outshine the sun,*
gulli thakthan	*Of gold its roof,*
á Gimli (hám);	*It stands in heaven.*
thar skulo dyggvar	*The virtuous there*
dróttir byggia,	*Shall always dwell,*
ok um aldur daga	*And evermore*
yndis nióta.	*Delights enjoy.*

In the death-song of Regner Lodbrok, we are furnished with an interesting specimen of Scandinavian poetry, which, besides exhibiting the state of the art, gives a striking description of the spirit which predominated, and the manners which obtained among the northern nations at the period of its composition. Regner was king of Denmark, and flourished towards the close of the eighth century. In the course of his piratical expeditions he landed in England, where, after committing a number of depredations, and fighting numerous battles, he was made prisoner by Ella, a Northumbrian prince. As a punishment for the outrages he had committed, he was shut up in a dungeon filled with serpents, and while the poison he received from their bite was operating, he sang the following warlike and ferocious song:

LODBROKAR QVIDA.	LODBROK'S DEATH-SONG.*
FLOCKR.	CHORUS.
Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.	*We hew'd with our Swords!*
LODBROK.	LODBROK.
Hitt var ei fyrir laungo	*When first we landed on the Gothic*
Er á Gaut-landi gengom	*shore, vengeance soon o'ertook the wily*
At graf-vitnis mordi;	*dragon miner of the ground—'twas then*
Thà fengom ver Thoro.	*I won my* Thora. *Men call'd me Lod-*
Thathan heto mic fyrdar,	*brok, from what time I slew the snaky*
Er ling-âl um lagda'c,	*dweller of the heath. At that assault,*
Lod-Brok. At thvi vigi	*my polish, inlaid with burnish'd gold,*
Stack ec â stordar-lyckio	*transfix'd the circling monster of the*
Stâli biartra mála.	*earth.*

* Both the original text and the translation are taken from the edition of the Poem published in Copenhagen, 1782, by the Rev. James Johnstone, A. M. Chaplain to the British Embassy at the Court of Denmark.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Helldr var ec ungr thá er fengom
Austr i Eyrar-Sundi
Undorn frecom vargi
Oc fot-gulom fugli.
Fengom ver thar eth sungo
Vith hâ-seimda hiàlma
Haurd iârn micils verdar.
Allr var aegir sollinn.
Od hrafin i val-blodi.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Blooming was my youth when east at Eyra's straits, opposing bands we gash'd for the insulting wolves, and golden-footed king of birds—there, while our temper'd steel sung on the high-seam'd helm, they found a rich repast. Gore distain'd the deep. The raven waded through the blood of the slain.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hatt barom thá geyra
Er tvi-togir taldunz
Oc tyr ruthom vitha.
Unnom âtta Jarla
Austr i Dyno-mynni.
Gera fengom tha gnoga
Gisting at thvi vigi.
Sveiti fell i ollin
Sae. Tyndi lith aesi.

We hew'd with our Swords!

High I bore my [illegible], and wide I carried my ensang[illegible] blade before I number'd twenty years. Eight Earls grac'd my triumphs at the Dwina's mouth—there we the falcon entertained with plenteous meals. The crimson sweat of death poured on the sullen sea. Warriors lost their lives.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hethins qvonar varth authit
Thá er Helsingia heimtom
Til heim-sala Othins.
Laugdom upp i Ifu.
Fiödr nâthi thá bita.
Aull var unda gialfri
A su rodin heito.
Greniadi brandr i brynio.
Ben-silder klufo scilldi.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Heiden's queen indulg'd our thirst of fame, while to the hall of Odin we dispatch'd Helsinga's race. Our galleys enter'd Iva's flood. Keenly bit the feather'd arrow. Streams, gushing from the reeking wounds, soon ting'd the redd'ning torrent. Swords rung upon the breast-plate. Deathful weapons cleft the targe.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hygg ec enginn thá flydi
Athr enn á hefils-hestom
Her-rauthr i styr felli.
Klyfr ei aegis-aundrom
Annar Jarlinn fraegri
Lundar-vaull til laegis
A lâng-scipom sidan:
Sâ bar siklingr vitha
Snart fram i styr hiarta.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Methinks none from the battle turn'd till 'midst his winged steeds fierce Herraud died. While posting to the destin'd port, no Earl, of old, borne by the foaming coursers of the main, more fearless plough'd the sea-fowl's haunt. Aye his dareful heart propell'd him headlong through the troubled fight.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Herr kastathi skiaulldom
Thá er rac-gagari rendi
Reistr at gumna briostom.
Beit i Scarpa-skeriom
Sceri-billdr at hialldri.
Rothinn varth randar-mâni,
Athr Rafn Conongr felli.
Dreif or haullda hausom
Heitr á brynior svitu.

We hew'd with our Swords!

The warriors dropt their bucklers—brands, the rifters of life, flew wrathful from their scabbards against the bosoms of the brave. At Scarpa-skeria cruelly hack'd the trenchant battle-axe. Red were the borders of our moony shields, until King Rafn died. The tepid blood, spurting from the temples of the valiant, was drifted on their harness.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hatt grem[illegible] hrottar
Athar á Ullar-Akri
Ey-steinn Conongr felli.
Gengom gulli fathir
Grundar vals at bryndom.
Rac-kindill sneith randir
Rittr at hialma-moti.
Svira-vin or sârom
Sveif of hiarna klcifar.

We hew'd with our Swords!

On Ulla's plain loud roar'd the spear ere to our force King Eistein bow'd. Gleaming in gold the slaught'rous field we travers'd. The taper'd lance, indignant, bor'd the shield, at the helm'd conflict. Rills, of winy hue, warm from the wounded neck, flow'd down the hero's shoulder.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hafa gâto thá hrafnar
Fyrir Indyris eyio
Aerna brâd at slita.
Fengom Falo-hestom
Fullan verd at sinni.
Illt var eins at gaeta.
Med upp-runa solar
Streing-vaulor sa ek stiga:
Stacc âlmr af ser mâlmi.

We hew'd with our Swords!

The raven at Indoro's isle might for himself have torn a sumptuous banquet. We soon procur'd a glutt'nous meal for Fala's speedful wolves—ill then the corslet fenced the warrior's body. By the orient lamp of light, I saw shafts starting from the string. The flexile yew sent forth the barbed reed.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hádom rendor i dreyra
Thá er bon-thvara hendom
Fyrir Borg-undar-holmi.
Hregg-scy slito hringa,
Hratt âlmr af ser mâlmi
Vulnir fell at vigi;
Var-at einn Conongr meiri.
Val rak vidt of strandir.
Vargr fagnathi tafni.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Stained were our shields with gore when on Borgunda's isle we bent the trusty bow. Clouds of arrows pierc'd the close-ring'd harness. Vulner was mingled in the carnage—no chief was more renown'd. Crowded was the strand with a cadav'rous wreck. The savage beast was gladden'd with his prey.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hilldr var synt i vexti
Athr Freyre cononar felli
I Flæmingia velldi.
Nâthi blârr at bita
Bloth-smelltr i gylltan
Haugna-kufl at hialldri
Hardr ben-grifill fordom.
Maer gret morgin scaera:
Maurg tha er tafn fekz vaurgom.

We hew'd with our Swords!

High waxed the joys of [illegible] on the Belgian plains King Freyer stoop'd to fate. There the hard blue falchion forced its way, till, drenched in blood, it rent the golden cuirass. The virgin wail'd that dawning morn—she saw a copious feast prepar'd for rav'ning wolves.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hundrodom frâ ec liggia
A ey-nefis-aundrom
Thar er Engla-nes heitir.
Sigldom ver till snerro
Sex daegor âdr lid felli.
Attom odda-messo
Vid uppruna solar.
Vard fyrir vorom sverdom
Val-thiofr i tyr falla.

We hew'd with our Swords!

At Engla-nes, I vow, by hundreds were the adversaries strew'd among their ships that lurk'd around our isles. For six long days our gallies speeded to the contest—humbled, at last, was the insulting foe. With the uprising sun we chaunted the matins of dire battle. Amidst the stir, Waldeve was doom'd to sink beneath our swords.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hrundi daug af sverdom
Bryn i Bartha-firdi.
Bleican nâ fyrir hauka.
Vindi âlmr thar er oddar
All-hratt bito skyrtor
I slidor-loga-senno
Svolnis hatte thaefdar.
Rendi ormr til unda
Eitr-hvass drifinn sveita.

We hew'd with our Swords!

By Bertha's haven down from our points distill'd the dew of death. Wan lay the lifeless trunk before the hawk. Loud humm'd the bow-string—shafts, hurrying thro' the glare of brands unsheath'd, transfix'd the morion 'midst the press of close wove armour. Meantime our swords, sharp as the viper' poison, ope'd the bleeding gash.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Helldom hlackar-traulldom
Hâtt at hildar-leiki,
Fyrir Hiadninga-vagi.
Siâ knatto thá Seggir
Er sundrodom sciaulldo
At brae-sillna hialdri
Hiâhn slitnadan gotna.
Var'at sem biarta bruthi
I bing hi' ser leggia.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Near Hadninga's bay high tower'd our crests in fierce encounter. While in the fell dispute we split the shiver'd targe, men might observe our baneful falchions cleave the casques of heroes—the sight was pleasing to my heart as when my blooming bride I seated by me on the chair of state.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Haurd kom rid a sciaulldo;
Nàr fell nidr til iardar
A Northymbra-landi.
Var'at um eina otto
Auldom thaurf at fryia
Hilldar-leik thar er hvassir
Hialm-stofn hito skiomar.
Var'at sem unga eckio
I aund-vegi kista'c.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Hard came the tempest of war upon our bucklers, till low lay the foe on the Northumbrian shore. None, on that morning, needed rouse the rueful sport of Hilda. The tempered edge divided steel-capt skulls—the scene was sweet as when I welcom'd the youthful widow to my throne pre-eminent.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Herr-thiofi vard a thit
I Sudor-Eyiom sialfom
Sigors a vorom maunnom:
Vard i randa-regni
Raugn-valldr fyrir-hniga:
Sà kom haestr of hauka
Harmr: at sverda-gusti
Hvast kastadi hristir
Alm streing-laga palmi.

We hew'd with our Swords!

O'er my men for Herthiof was decreed a splendid victory in the Sudoreys. Rognvald fail'd before the storm of spears. The mishap of their provider full sore the hawks bewail'd—amidst the gust of swords, ne'er did the string of his unerring bow dismiss its bolts in vain.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hverr là thverr of annan.
Gladr vard gera brothir:
Geto vid soknar læti.
Let ei aurn ne ylgi
Sà er Ir-landi styrdi
(Mot vard màlms oc ritar)
Mar-steinn conongr fasta.
Vard i Vethra-firdi
Val-tafn gefit hrafni.

We hew'd with our Swords!

In heaps promiscuous was piled the enemy. Glad was the kindred of the Falcon—from the clam'rous shout they boded an approaching feast. Marstein Erin's King, whelm'd by the iron sleet, allay'd the hunger of the eagle, and the wolf. The slain at Wedra's gulf became the Raven's booty.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hundmarga sà ec falla
Morgin-stund fyrir meidi
Menn at odda-senno.
Syni minom hneit snemma
Slithr-thorn vid hiarta:
Egill let Agnar raentan
U-blauthan hal-liti.
Glumdi geirr vith Hamdis
Gran-serk. Bliko merki.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Numerous were the bands, which, with the early dawn, I sacrificed in the sore onset slaughtered. Too soon a thorn, issuing from its sheath, stung the heart of my son Ragnar—'twas Egil rest the fearless youth of life. Weapons thunder'd on our steel-proof armour. Our pennons glistened in the skies.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Halld-orda sâ ec brytia
Egi smatt fyrir Ulfa
Endils nitha braundom.
Varat â-vik á Scœthi
Sem vin conor baeri.
Rotheinn var ægis-asni
O-fârr i dyn-geira
Scorin var Scoglar kâpa
At Sciaulldunga hialldri.

We hew'd with our Swords!

I descried the Sons of Endil, true to their promise, carving liberally for the wolves. Delightful was the strife at Scaia, as when the damsels bring the purple wine. Red were our steeds that bound along the surge. Amidst the din of arms full oft was Scogul's iron vesture ripp'd by Skiold's hardy race.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hâr-fagran sâ ec hrauckva
Meyar dreng at morgni
Oc mâl-vin eckio.
Var'at sem varmar laugar
Vin-kers niorun baeri
O.s i Ila-sundi.
Aur Aurn Conongr fell
Bauth mâna sâ ec brezta
Brâ thvi fira lifi.

We hew'd with our Swords!

With the rising sun we saw the lover of the maid, and the wooer of the widow, fainting heartless in his locks. Pleasant was the sight at Ila's straits, as when the ministring virgin hands the fuming goblet. Ere King Aurn fell, I mark'd the warding shield to pieces hacked, and chieftains gasp in death.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hâthom sverd-glâm at morgni
Leik fyrir Lindis-Eyri
Vid Lofdunga threnna.
Fârr âtti thvi fagna
(Fell margr i gyn Ulfi,
Haukr sleit hold med vargi),
At hann heill thathan kaemi.
Ira bloth i aegin
Aerit fell in scaera.

We hew'd with our Swords!

South at Leinster, with the breaking day, commenced a stubborn struggle against three kings. Few went joyous from that conflict—few cou'd boast that they escap'd unhurt. Within the wolf's wide gaping jaws full many sunk. The Falcon's offspring pounced the mangled limbs. Erin's blood, streaming from the decks, flow'd on the deep beneath.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hâ sverd bito scilldi
Thá er gull-rodinn glumthi
Geirr vith Hilldar-naefri.
Sia mun i Aungols-Eyio
Of alldr mega sithan
Hve ver at laugdom leiki
Lofdungar fram-gengom.
Rodinn var ut fyrir eyri
Ar flug-dreki sâra.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Shields were riven by the uplifted falchion. Blades, rich with ruddy gold, resounded on the mail of Hilda. Future ages shall review the spot on Mona's shore, where, in array, we stalked to beard the adversary. Our spears, swift as the dragon's flight, were deeply dyed along that bank where seas ingulf the mountain torrent.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hverr se drengr at fegri
At hann i odda-eli
Aundverdr lätinn verthi?
Opt sitir sá aefi
Er alldregi nistir.
Illt qvetha argan eggia
Aurom at hilldar-leiki:
Hug-blauthom kemr hvergi
Hiarta sitt at gagni.

We hew'd with our Swords!

What youth is fairer among men than he, who, far advancing thro' the blast of jav'lins, bends under adverse wounds—they 'scape not human woe that shun the hard-fought field. Yet 'tis hard to egg the coward soul to deeds of manhood—the dastard's heart ne'er moves him on to feats of valour.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hitt tel ek iafnt at gängi
At sam-togi sverda
Sveinn i moti sveini
Hrauckv'at thegn fyrir thegni.
That var drengs athall lengi.
Ae scal ást-vinr meyia
Ein-hardr i dyn-sverda.

We hew'd with our Swords!

That I esteem fair combat when, at the rude interview of swords, youth meetshis youth, and thane yields not to thane——this was, in ancient times, the pride of chiefs. Bold shou'd the lover of the fair be seen amidst the battle's whirlwind.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hirt synis mer raunar
At for-laugom fylgiom.
Fár gengr of scaup norna.
Eigi hugda ec Ello
At alldr-lagi mino
Thá er ec bloth-vali breidda'c,
Oc bord á laug keyrtha'c:
Vitt fengom thá vargi
Verth i Scot-lands fiaurdom.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Experience proves that we must follow destiny. Few can evade the potency of fate. Little did I dream that e'er my days by Ella wou'd be bounded—when I strew'd his land with the slain—when I led my ships into his havens—when we gorged the beasts of prey along the Scot's bays.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hitt hlacir mic iafnan
At Baldors fedors-becki
Burn veit ec at sumblom.
Dreckom bior at bragdi
Or hing-vithum hauna.
Sytir ei drengr vid dauda
Dirs at Fiaulnis lusoth:
Egi kem ec med aethro
Orth til Vithris hallar.

We hew'd with our Swords!

But still, there is a never-failing consolation for my spirit—the board of Balder's sire stands open to the brave. Soon from the foe's capacious skull we'll drink the amber beverage. Departed heroes know no griefs when once they enter the palace of dread Fiolnir—I'll not approach the courts of Vithris with the faltering voice of fear."

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Her villdo mic allir
Burir Aslaugar braundom
Biaurtom hilldi vekia.
Ef vandliga vissi
Of vith-farar ossar:
Hve u-fair ormar
Eitor-fullir mic slita.
Mothernis feck ec minom
Maugom sva't hiaurto duga.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Soon would the sons of Aslaug come, arm'd with their flaming brands, to wake the battle, did they but know of our mischance—what a swarm of vipers, big with venom, sting my body! —I sought a noble mother for my children—one that might impart advent'rous hearts to my posterity.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hardla lidr at arfe.
Grimt stendr grand af nathri.
Goin byggir sal hiarta.
Væntom hins at Vithris
Vaundr i Ello standi.
Sonom minom man svella
Sinn saudor vidin verda
Ei mano snarpir sveinar
Sitt kyrt vera lita.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Now to my heir devolves the crown. Grim seem the terrors of the adder. Serpents nest within my heart's recesses—yet 'tis the cordial of my soul, that Vithris' lance shall soon stick fast in Ella. My sons will swell with vengeance at their parent's doom—those gen'rous youths will, sure, forego the sweets of peace.

Hiuggom ver med hiaurvi.

Hefi'c fim-tio sinnom
Folk-orrostor framdar
Flein-things-bothi oc eino.
Minnz hugda ec manna
At mer vera skylldi
(Ungr nam'c odd at rioda)
Annarr Konongr fraegri:
Oss mano Æsir bioda
Er'at sytandi daudi.

We hew'd with our Swords!

Full fifty times my lance, dire devastation's harbinger, announc'd the distant enterprise. Methinks no King has truer cause to glory—it was the pastime of my boyish days, to tinge my spear with blood. The immortals will permit my presence in their company. No sigh shall e'er disgrace my exit.

Fysomz hins at hætta.

Heim biotha mer Disir
Sem fra herians haullo
Hefir Odinn mer sendar.
Glathr scall ec aul med Asom
Laund-vegi drecka.
Lifs ero lithnar stundir.
Laegiandi scall ec deyia.

Now let us cease our Song!

See! the celestial virgins, sent from that Hall where Odin's martial train resides, invite me home. There happy on my high-rais'd throne, I'll quaff the barley's mellow'd juices. The moments of my life are fled. The smiles of death compose my placid visage.

At the time the above poem was composed, or about the end of the eighth century, the poetry of the northern nations began to assume a very different garb from that by which their earlier productions had been distinguished. Their poets abandoned the simple and natural style of antiquity, attempted to reduce their compositions to fanciful metrical rules, and introduced a vast number of new species of versification. They not only used the utmost liberty in the transposition of words, and carried their metaphors to the most extravagant lengths, but indulged in the wildest fancies, and swelled so much into the bombastic, as, in many instances, to become perfectly ridiculous.

But the nature of the versification was not more different from that of the ancients, than were the subjects of the poems themselves. While the earlier compositions embrace abstract ideas, ethics, mythology, the pastoral life, &c. the more recent re-echo scarcely any other sound than the horrid uproar of war. The same mythological ideas are found in both, which proves them to be the productions of the same people; but the circumstances in which they were composed were altogether different. The former were put together in times of peace, when the poet had no impending invasion to describe, no warriors to animate, no martial exploits to celebrate, nor any particular enemy against whom to level the shafts of poetical invective. In the latter, little else is heard than the tocsin of war, the clashing of shields, or the fanatical cries of wounded and dying warriors.

This remarkable change in the effusions of the northern muse, is easily accounted for, by adverting to the political circumstances of the inhabitants of Scandinavia. They were divided under the rule of a number of petty princes, who were continually carrying on war against each other; and some of the more powerful extended their conquests into foreign countries, and acquired an immense booty, which they brought back on their return to their native country. On these expeditions, each prince was attended by his poet-laureat, who sang the deeds of his royal ancestors, celebrated his own military virtues, and animated his warriors to feats of warlike glory.

From the time of Regner Lodbrok to the days of Snorro Sturluson, comprising a period of three centuries, we meet with a series of upwards of two hundred celebrated poets, whose existence is established by the most indubitable historical proofs; and

of the poetical compositions of eighty of these, scattered fragments are still extant in the Sagas, and especially in that part of the more recent Edda, called the *Kenningar*, where we find nearly five hundred verses quoted from their respective poems, in illustration of the rules laid down in that treatise.

The following is a list of some of the more eminent poets of this period:

Regner Lodbrok, whose death-song is inserted above.

Egil Skallagrimson. His principal poem is the "Höfudlausn," or, The Redemption of his Head, which he composed in praise of Eirik Blodoxe, king of Norway, and thereby saved his life. It forms one of the five pieces of Runic poetry, published London 1763, 8vo.

Einar Skalaglam, author of the "Velekla," a poem on the heroic exploits of Hakon Jarl.

Eyvind Skaldaspiller, whose "Hakonarmâl," or Eulogium of Hakon, is reckoned one of the best productions of the northern Scalds. See five pieces of Runic poetry.

Gunnlaug Ormstunga.

Marcus Skeggiason. His beautiful poem on King Eirik, called "Eiriks-drâpa," is preserved in the Knytlinga Saga.

Olaf Hvitaskald, author of part of the Edda, and of a poem, in praise of Waldemar, King of Denmark.

Ottar Svart. "Knutz-drâpa."

Sighvat Thordarson.

Snorro Sturluson. "Hâttalykil," &c.

Sturla Thorarson. "Hakonar-qvida," and "Rafnsmâl."

Thord Kolbeinson. "Eiriks-drâpa." *

It is a striking fact, that most of these poets were natives of Iceland. Situated at a distance from the turbulent scenes of discord and war, the inhabitants of that island enjoyed the most favourable opportunities of cultivating the arts of peace, while the recital of the history of their ancestors, most of whom were connected with the first families in Norway, had a natural tendency to stimulate them to apply to the study of eloquence, and to inspire them with a desire to visit a country which had been the scene of so many great and noble achievements. The first Icelandic poets who went over to the Continent succeeded so well,

* Udsigt over Nordens Ældste Poesi Kiöbenhavn, 1798.

that the art began to be cultivated with greater ardour than ever in the vallies of Iceland; and, ere long, a numerous order of men, distinguished by the name of *Skalds*, or polishers of language, was spread over the whole of the north, and many of them flourished at the English courts.

When a Skald was anxious to improve his external circumstances, he repaired to the court of a prince, or earl, and requested liberty to repeat one of his poems. If the song was approved of, the poet was instantly rewarded with the present of a gold ring, a sword, or a suit of rich apparel; and, as had been customary among the Anglo-Saxons, he was admitted into the number of the royal attendants. He was often raised to fill the second place in the hall, and thus became the principal officer of state, the genealogist and historiographer, and the intimate counsellor and friend of his master. The other courtiers generally learned his poems by heart, that wherever they came they might resound the praises of their lord, and with these the honour of the poet was always inseparably connected. Of the importance of these poets, we cannot desire a more convincing proof than the fact, that they oftentimes told their princes truths which no other person would have dared to utter.

Before taking the field of battle, it was the office of the Skald to compose a poem suited to the occasion, which he repeated in the presence of the king; and the soldiers, learning it from one another, animated each other by its repetition while engaged in fighting the enemy. During the engagement, the poet took his station near his master, that he might witness his bravery, and be able to transmit his fame to posterity. Thus, in the battle of *Stiklastad*, A. D. 1030, King Olave ordered his poets to enter the *Skiálldborg*, or the body-guard, consisting of a number of choice warriors, who surrounded the king with their shields: "Ye shall be here," said Olave, "that you may see with your own eyes what is achieved this day, and have no occasion, when ye shall afterwards celebrate these actions in song, to depend upon the reports of others."

The introduction of Christianity into the northern nations, tended in no small degree to check the progress of the Skaldic muse, by civilizing the habits and manners of the people, and curbing that unbridled passion for war which they had so long indulged, and which furnished the poet with so many striking

subjects for popular composition. It was, in all probability, the suspicion lest the art might entirely be lost, in proportion as the ancient mythological ideas should sink into oblivion, which first suggested the necessity of collecting the poems of antiquity, and treasuring up for the use of future Skalds, the poetical figures and synonymes in common use among their predecessors. Hence originated the *Edda*, that celebrated work of northern antiquity, to which we are principally indebted for our knowledge of the Scandinavian mythology. As the collection of the different materials of which that work is composed, falls within the period under consideration, I shall insert some account of it at this place.

In regard to the name *Edda*,* the learned have been nearly as much divided as they have differed in their opinions respecting the work itself. The more probable interpretation is that of Mr Olafsen, who derives it from the obsolete verb *æda*, "to teach," and concludes that it was intended to designate poetry as the science or art, by way of eminence. The Edda consists of two parts, the former known by the name of *Sæmund's Edda*, containing a collection of ethic, mythological, and historical poems; and the latter, commonly called *Snorro's Edda*, treats of the art of poetry, and exhibits, by way of illustration, fragments of ancient poetical compositions.

The more ancient, or prosodiacal Edda, is generally ascribed to Sæmund Frodè, as he is supposed to have had the principal hand in collecting its contents: These consist of thirty-eight poems, of which the following are the subjects:

1. *Hâvamâl*, or "The Sublime Speech of Odin," comprising a number of ancient maxims and proverbs, in which the manners and sentiments of the Scandinavians are strikingly depicted.

2. *Solarliod*, "The Solar Poem," a much more recent production, in which evident traces of the Christian doctrine are to be found.

3. *Völuspâ*, "The Prophecy of Vola," containing fragments of a complete system of Northern mythology.

4. *Vafthrudnismâl*, "The Poem of Vafthrudnir" the giant, who proposes a number of questions respecting the creation of the world, &c. to which answers are given by Odin.

* Bede mentions one *Edda*, a monk at Canterbury, who was a learned man, and *primus computandi magister*, lib. iv. cap. 2. Query, Might not this coincidence admit of some elucidation?

5. *Grimnismâl*, "The Poem of Grimnir;" a name under which Odin concealed himself; and, while in a state of imprisonment, he composed this song, in which he enumerates the names and habitations of the gods, &c.

6. *Skirnisför*, "The Journey of Skirnir" to Iotunheim, or the abode of the giants.

7. *Harbardsliod*, a poem containing a dialogue between Thor and the ferryman Harbard, who would not on any account row him across a river.

8. *Hymisqvida* treats of a visit from Thor and Tyr to the giant Hymir, in order to procure from him a kettle in which to prepare a feast for the gods.

9. *Egisdrekka*, or the famous banquet at which Lok (the evil spirit) slanders the gods.

10. *Thrymsqvida* treats of the betrothing of Thor, in the disguise of Freya, with Thrym, the king of the giants, in order to recover his hammer, which had been stolen from him.

11. *Hrafnagaldr Odins*. "The Magic Song of the Ravens of Odin;" giving an account of an embassy of Braga and Heimdal to Iduna, one of the goddesses of fate, with the view of ascertaining the future destinies of the gods and the world.

12. *Vegtamsqvida*. Odin travels under the name of Vegtam to the habitation of the goddess of the dead; and raises a witch, whom he interrogates respecting the meaning of some dreams which had terrified his beloved Baldur.

13. *Alvismâl* treats of the appellatives given to different objects in the languages of the gods, giants, men, &c.

14. *Fiölsvinnsmâl*. A very obscure poem, which is supposed to contain a number of obscene riddles.

15. *Hyndluliód*. "The Song of Hyndla," or the shorter Völuspâ.

16. *Grógalldur*. "The Magic Song of Groa," in which she teaches her son a number of necromantic arts, during a short period in which she is raised from the dead.

17. *Gróttasaungr*. A song about the hand-mill Grotte, with which Frode, King of Denmark, caused the two gigantic girls, Fenia and Menia, to grind gold.

18. *Gétspeki Heidreks Kongs*. A number of riddles which are proposed to King Heidrek by Odin, under the name of Gestur Blindi, together with their solutions.

19. *Völundarqvida.* A historic poem on Völund, a Finnish Prince, and Nidud, King of Sweden.

20. *Helgaqvida Haddingiaskada.* A similar poem on a Norwegian Prince of that name.

21—38. Contain poetical descriptions of the exploits of several distinguished individuals among the Goths, Franks, Huns, &c.*

The prosaic Edda, on the other hand, is a collection of various treatises, which are designed to elucidate the mythology of the ancient Scandinavians, and render more intelligible to younger poets the number of obscure and difficult passages in the works of their predecessors, and more especially in the odes of the Edda we have just described. It begins with a most absurd and ridiculous preface, which has evidently been prefixed to the work by some transcriber, tracing the connection of the northern nations with those of antiquity, and carrying back their genealogical relations to the original families enumerated in the book of Genesis. Then follow what are called the *Dœmisögur*, or "Dialogues," explanatory of the origin of the gods, the creation of the world, the principal events which are to fill up the period of the duration of the world, the final conflagration, the destruction of the gods, &c. The second division of the work comprehends the *Kenningar*, or "Instructions;" a digest of poetical phraseology, founded on, and illustrated by quotations from the principal Skalds. We here find not fewer than one hundred and thirty-seven synonymes of Odin; twenty-four of a bear; sixty-four of fire; sixty-five of gold, &c. The third treatise is called *Skâlda*, or "The Poetics;" and consists of a dissertation on the Icelandic alphabet, and a number of rules respecting the use of rhetorical and poetical figures. To this is appended Snorro's *Háttalykil*, or "The Key of Versification;" giving a view of the structure and measure of the different sorts of verse in use among the northern poets.

From the above view of this monument of Scandinavian antiquity, the reader will perceive that it is made up of a number of heterogeneous parts, all of which, however, are intended to facilitate and promote the study of Icelandic poetry. So far from being the work of any single individual, it is manifestly the result of the separate labours of different individuals at different periods of time; those who succeeded having improved and augmented

* Professor Magnusson's Indledning til Forelæsninger over den ældre Edda Kioben. 1816.

the productions of such as had previously written on the subject. The disputes which have arisen respecting these writers are not yet settled; nevertheless, it has been rendered as probable as the nature of the question will allow, that the individuals concerned in reducing the Edda to its present form, were Sæmund Frodè, Snorro Sturluson, and Olaf Thordarson, surnamed Hvitaskald, or the White Poet, a nephew of Snorro's, at whose house he received his education; and, having most likely been employed by his uncle in transcribing his historical and poetical works, he not only possessed the best opportunities of cultivating the art of poetry, but had access to know the sources from which the Skaldic rules had been derived. The argument, on which the share these learned Icelanders had in the work rests, is similar to that generally employed in determining the authors of other ancient compositions, *viz.* the universal consent and tradition of their own countrymen, and the coincidence between such works and their general habits and studies.

The simplicity and natural structure of the Eddaic poetry, furnish a strong internal proof of the antiquity of the pieces ascribed to Sæmund; and, as they must have been collected before the work was enlarged by Snorro, there does not appear to have been any so likely to make such a collection as that learned priest. From the notices we have respecting him, his attention was strongly bent on the antiquities of his countrymen; and it was impossible for him to gather the different accounts, which had passed from generation to generation, through the medium of oral tradition, without falling in with numerous fragments of mythological import, especially as paganism had only been recently abolished, and many of its rites and doctrines must still have been fresh in the recollection of the Icelanders. That Snorro wrote part of the Edda is placed beyond all doubt by the testimony of his nephew. In his treatise on Orthography, Olaf observes: "Nevertheless, we may still use the expressions and appellatives of the ancients, only we do not carry them further than what is allowed by Snorro." Here is an explicit acknowledgment of Snorro's work—a recognition of his poetic phraseology as the standard, beyond which it would be improper to augment the poetical synonymes. The circumstance, too, that the genealogical table, and the list of Icelandic Lögmen, in the Upsala Codex, are both continued till they come to Snorro Sturluson, if it does not prove that he

was alive at the time this codex was written, it at least substantiates the hypothesis, that the transcriber viewed him as the author of the Edda, which goes by his name; else, why should he just happen to stop when he comes to him. The codex referred to bears evident marks of its having been written before the fourteenth century; and the superscription, which expressly declares the Edda to be the work of Snorro, is ascertained to have been written by the same person that wrote the rest of the volume. *

The Edda of Sæmund was first sent from Iceland by the learned Bishop Svenson, about the middle of the seventeenth century. It is beautifully written in parchment, and is still preserved in the Royal Library of Copenhagen. There exists also a number of paper codices, containing various readings, many of which greatly elucidate the original text. Of Snorro's Edda there exist two principal codices, written on parchment: viz. the Wormian MS. in the University Library of Copenhagen, and the Upsala MS. preserved in the library of that university, besides a number of manuscripts on paper to be met with in different libraries on the Continent. There is a copy of the Upsala Codex preserved among the Marshall MSS. Oxford, No. 114. 8vo.

The first edition of the Edda was published by Resenius, accompanied with a Latin and Danish version, Copenhagen, 1665, in 4to; but it contains only the part composed by Snorro, with the addition of the *Völuspá* and *Hávamâl*. It is reckoned very imperfect, and the Icelandic text is so full of errors, that little dependence can be placed on it. Göranson's edition, with a Swedish and Latin version, published in 4to, at Upsala 1746, is still more imperfect: but the Swedes have recently been put in possession of an excellent edition of both parts of the Edda, by the united exertions of Messrs Rask † and Afzelius. Of the more ancient

* Skand. Litt. Selsk. Skrift. 1812, förste Hefte, p. 97.

† Mr Rask is the editor of the Icelandic Lexicon, and the learned author of an Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon Grammar, and several other philological works of great value in northern literature. In the years 1814 and 1815, he made the tour of Iceland, with the view of collecting what might remain of the ancient monuments of antiquity, and gaining a more intimate acquaintance with the Icelandic language; and he has recently proceeded through Sweden, Finland, and Russia, to the regions between the Caspian and Black Seas, for the purpose of tracing the connection between the languages of the tribes inhabiting those parts, and those of the northern nations of Europe.

Edda, a correct edition is publishing by the Arnæmagnæan Committee in Copenhagen: the first volume appeared 1787 in 4to, and the rest of the work is expected soon to be ready. A very accurate Danish version of Snorro's Edda was published by Professor Nyerup, Copenhagen 1808, and the best German translation was produced by Professor Rühs of Berlin, 1812. Besides translations and editions of single odes, there exist in English a version of Snorra's Edda in Percy's translation of Mallet's Northern Antiquities, and a poetical version of such of the poems of Sæmund's Edda, as had appeared in the first volume of the Copenhagen edition, by A. S. Cottle of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Bristol, 1797.

After the introduction of Christianity among the northern nations, the attention of the poets was more directed to the legends and pretended miracles of the church of Rome, and the saints now occupied the place of the heroes of antiquity. Of the Skaldic productions of this nature, the most celebrated are: *Geisla*, or "The Ray," composed by Einar Skulason in praise of St Olave; and *Lilia*, or "The Lily," an encomiastic poem on the Virgin Mary, by the monk Eystein. The former consists of sixty-eight verses of eight lines each, and is printed with a Danish and Latin version in the third volume of Snorro Sturluson's Heimskringla, pp. 461—480. The Lily has been held in such estimation by the Icelanders, that it has passed into the proverb, *Öll skálld vilddu Lilia kvedit hafa*; "Every poet wishes he had been the author of the Lily." The original is printed along with two Latin versions by Finn Jonson in the second volume of his Ecclesiastical History, pp. 398—464. It contains exactly one hundred eight-lined verses.

Since the Reformation, the Icelandic poets have, in a great measure, confined themselves to religious subjects; and it is somewhat remarkable, that they have not only given their countrymen numerous metrical versions of the poetical books of Scripture, but have also translated many of the historical books into Icelandic verse.

Several eminent poets flourished in the course of last century. The more celebrated were, Paul Vidalin, Eggert Olafson, Gunnar Paulson, Halgrim Peterson, and Stephen Olafson. The most distinguished poets of the present day are; Jon Thorlakson, author of the beautiful translation of Milton's Paradise Lost, Pope's

Essay on Man, and various other poetical effusions; Thorvald Bödvarson, the translator of Gellert's Christian, and Pope's Messiah; Professor Magnusson, Benedict Gröndal, Jon Jonson, and Sigurd Peterson.

Having thus taken a view of the state of Scandinavian poetry, from its earliest periods down to the present time, I now proceed to examine its peculiar character, as it regards the structure and kinds of versification in which it appears.

The most prominent feature of the Icelandic poetry is undoubtedly its alliteration, or the assonance produced by a correspondence between certain letters or syllables. The fundamental rule of this alliteration is, that there be in every couplet three words, having the same initial letter, two of which must occur in the former hemistich, and the other in the latter. The last, which generally forms the initial word, and must always stand as near the beginning of the line as possible, is called in Icelandic *Höfutstafr*, or "Cardinal," being that which governs the others; and these are termed *Studlar*, or, "Auxiliaries," because they support and give force to the cardinal. The two following examples from the Icelandic Milton will illustrate this rule; the alliteration being distinguished by capitals:—

Gott at Göra	Vid that Villu-diup
Gétum ver aldrei.	Vard enum slæga
To do good will m'er	Bölverk Bidleikat
be our task.	Barmi vitis à;
	—Into this vast abyss; the wary fiend
	Stood on the brink of hell.

Here the alliteration is perfect; the number of corresponding letters is complete; they are all accentuated; and the cardinal occupies the primary place in the second hemistich. This perfection is almost always found in the longer kinds of versification, when the line exceeds four long syllables, as in this case the poet has more freedom of choice, and possesses a greater facility in composition than in the shorter kinds of verse. In compositions of the latter sort, however, two licenses are allowed: The poet may introduce one or more particles, or short words, into the beginning of the second hemistich, only they must be unaccented, thus:—

Ar var Alda,	*In early times,*
Thâ Ymir bygthi,	*When Ymir lived,*
Var-a Sandr, nè Saer,	*Was sand, nor sea,*
Ne Svalar unnir,	*Nor cooling wave.*

where *thâ* and *nè* are the augmentative words. Or, one word only in the former hemistich may be made to correspond with the cardinal in the latter, as:—

Sat a Trón hafinn	*High on a throne*
Tignarliga.	*Of royal state.*

The occasional use of these licenses has a good effect, by giving a variety to the quantity, and thus prevents monotony.

When the cardinal word happens to begin with a double or compound consonant, as; *bl, br, dr, gl, gr, sk,* &c. the auxiliaries must begin in the same manner. For instance,—

Thá á HLær HLyti	*—which all night long*
HLeypti nâtt-orum,	*had roused the sea, now with rough*
Er Sidan Svæfir	*cadence fell;*
Sæing-om hâsum	*Sea-faring men o'er watched, whose*
Thann of Siglir Sæ	*bark by chance,*
Sér i hle boda	*Or pinnace, anchors in a craggy bay*
SKylanda SKadu	*after the tempest.*
Vid SKarki vindar.	

Here *hl* and *sk* form the compound alliteration, and the *s* in the two middle couplets, the single. Of all the compound consonants, none are in more common use than *sk, sp,* and *st,* which association seems to possess a peculiar charm in the ear of the Scandinavian poet; and though it was allowable to combine other letters with the rest of the compounds, it was absolutely intolerable to do it with these.

This strict exactness of alliteration, however, is entirely confined to consonants. When the cardinal is a vowel, or a diphthong, the auxiliaries may begin with any of the other vowels or diphthongs. Thus in the example produced above, from the Völuspâ, the cardinal is *y,* and both of the auxiliaries *a*: to which I add another instance from the poet Sighvat:—

Loptbyggvir mâtto læggia	*Thou who wast accustomed to asso-*
Landrett thunn er kan standaz,	*ciate with naval warriors, didst*
Unnar Allra manna	*ordain those celestial laws which*
EYkia lids à midli.	*shall ever remain inviolate.*

In regard to the use of the vowels and diphthongs, uniformity is so far from being regarded as a beauty, that the alliteration is considered more pleasing when they are different; and *j*, *v*, and *h*, when followed by a vowel, are admitted into the number of correspondent letters.

When there is an unequal line, or a solitary member in a verse, such as the third and sixth lines of the six-membered stanzas, it always contains two alliterated words, as will appear from the following example from Vafthrudnismal, which exhibits at the same time the common assonance:—

Or Ymis holdi	*Of Ymir's flesh*
Var jörth um scapath,	*The earth was made,*
Enn or Beinom Biorg	*Of bones the mountains:*
Himin or hau i	*Heaven of the skull*
Ins Hrimkalda iotun	*Of the hoar-frosty giant;*
Enn or Sveita Siór.	*And of his sweat, the sea.*

With respect to the position of the cardinal, it was already observed, that it must never be far from the beginning of the second member of the hemistich; but the two auxiliaries may be placed any where in the first. They may follow each other, or be separated by one or more words. They may either be at the beginning or the end of the line; generally, however, the one begins the line, or is the first accented syllable, and the other is at or near the end, thus:—

Flótta geck til Frettar	*There on the plain, the hero who*
Felli niördr á velli.	*slew such as fled from battle, con-*
Draugr gat Dolga sögu	*sulted the divine oracle, by which*
Dagrád hedins vada.	*he was urged on to the combat with*
Oc Halld-bodi Hilldar	*assurance of victory. And he who*
Hræ-gamma sa ramma	*keeps up the sacrifices, courageous-*
Tŷr villdi thá Tyna	*ly invited the ravens, and prepared*
Tein-hlautar flor,gauta.	*to slay the Goths.*

Besides this system of assonances, which we meet with in the most ancient specimens of Icelandic poetry, the Skalds of the heroic period introduced a still more complicated alliteration, called

hending, which consists partly in a hemistichial, and partly in the common terminating rhyme.

The hemistichial rhyme is an assonance of two syllables in the same line, and generally they are so placed, that the penultimate corresponds in sound with the first, second, or third syllable, thus:—

Val-thÖGNar let vEGNum,	*The giver of gold caused the*
Vig nESTR saman brESTa,	*blood-stained shields to dash*
Handar nAFs of hÖFdum,	*against the heads of magnani-*
Hlym mILLDingum gILLDir.	*mous kings.*

This kind of rhyme is again divided into two sorts, the *skothending*, or *snidhending*, imperfect, or half rhyme; and *adalhending*, noble and full rhyme. The half rhyme has simply a harmony of consonants, without any regard to the vowels; as *ögn* and *egn*, *af* and *öf*, in the example just quoted. The full rhyme, on the other hand, consists in the perfect assonance both of consonants and vowels; as *est* in the second line, and *illd* in the fourth. The use of these two sorts of intermediate rhyme is left entirely to the taste of the poet; but the half rhyme is commonly used in the former, and the full rhyme in the latter hemistich. The more perfect the correspondence, the greater was the poetical merit of the composition; and the ear got so accustomed to certain combinations, that it became sensible to the smallest deviations from them. We accordingly find, that when the poet Thiodolf once rhymed *gröm* and *skömmo* together, King Harald at once detected the cacophony, and addressed him thus: "What a vulgar poet! Did you join *gröm* with *skömmo*? These rhymes are not equivalent." *

It appears to have been a rule in regard to the position of the assonant syllables, that the first should constitute the initial syllable; as, in conjunction with the emphasis, which in that case uniformly accompanied it, a greater force and majesty was thereby given to the verse. Some of the good poets, however, only introduced the rhyme with the second or third syllable. In Snorro's "Key," the first rhyme is called *Frum-hending*, and the second *Vidr-hending*; and, when the first occupies the initial syllable, it is called *Odd-hending*, and *Hlut-hending* when it occurs in the middle of the line.

* Olafsen, p. 43.

The terminating rhyme of the Icelanders is formed on the same principle with that of the poetry of other nations; only we find no instance before the Reformation, in which the first line is rhymed with the third, and the second with the fourth. The occurrence of this kind of rhyme may therefore be regarded as an innovation, and has most probably been transplanted from Denmark or Germany. Concluding rhymes are either single or compound, *i. e.* they are either formed by the ultimate, or by both the ultimate and penultimate together. Of the former, the following is an instance in the *Höfut-lausn*, or "Ransom" of Eigil:—

Bare thengils *lof*	*I published the fame of the*
A thagnar *rof*	*king, and knew how to instil*
Kann ec mæla *miöd*	*my words into the minds of the*
Vid manna *siöt*,	*people: my compositions flowed*
Or hlatra *ham*,	*so smoothly, and so charmed the*
Hrodr duttac *gram*,	*hearers, that most of them learnt*
That for sva *fram*,	*them by heart.*
At flestr of *nam*.	

An example from the "Key" will illustrate the latter:—

Mærd skal *auka*,	*My song shall augment the*
Mistar *lauka*,	*praise of him who stains the*
Gioma *sverdi*,	*shields. A song shall now be*
Grundar *skerdi*,	*sung (hearken ye people) in ho-*
Dyrd skal *segia*,	*nour of the courageous warrior.*
Drott má *thegia*,	
Styriar *gloda*,	
Stöckvi *moda*.	

Some of the Icelandic poets have carried their mania for rhyming so far, that they have introduced it into every alternating word in the poem; but as it required much art and study, it was seldom used. The following specimen is taken from a poem written about the beginning of the twelfth century:—

Framan unno gram gunnar,	*The excellent king was slain*
Grannis seids tamir meidar,	*by those accustomed to battle—*
Bjdo jótar lid lióta,	*the Jutes, whose crime was pu-*
Laga-gánga daga stránga.	*nished with evil days. Few, I*
Lofuc sialldan hof halldit,	*deem, keep within the bounds of*
Hataz dygd, hrataz lygdir,	*decency: virtue is hated; lies are*
Tregs hallda, vegs valldar	*circulated; and the estates of the*
Vegin arf megin diarfir.	*slain are possessed by the villain*
	and proud.

The most complete of any, however, is the kind called *Nyi-háttr*, or the new metre, in which every word is rhymed, as:—

Ræsir glæsir Röckva döckva Hvitum ritum Hreina reina Skreytir hreytir Skafna stafna Hringa stinga Hiörtum svörtum.	*The king bedecks his beautiful dark-coloured ships with white shields. The divider of gold hangs on the smooth-planed fore-castles the black heart-shaped anchors.*

I shall only adduce one variation more, which consists in beginning the second hemistich with the penultimate syllable of the first, thus:—

Hrein-tiörnum gledr horna Horn nâir litt at thorna Miödr hegnir bol bragna Bragningr scipa fagnir. Folk hömlo gefr fra mla Framlyndr vidum gamlar Sâs helldr fyrir skot skiölldum Skiölldungr hunângs ölldur.	*The king refreshes his warriors with the pure mead—mead which clothes the [illegible] of men. The horns are [illegible] empty. The aged and magnanimous monarch, who wields off the darts with his shield, divides the honey-drink among his warriors.*

To determine at what period alliteration was introduced into the Scandinavian poetry; or whether it may not have been used originally by all the Gothic poets, though those belonging to the southern or Teutonic branch may have neglected its cultivation, and thus suffered it to fall into oblivion; whether the Skalds were the inventors of it, or whether they borrowed it from some other nation: are questions which, in the total absence of historical proof, it is wholly impossible to solve. It might, however, be made a subject of curious inquiry, to trace the resemblances of a similar assonance, which exist in a greater or less degree in the poetry of all nations, though it might not be found to have been so completely reduced to rule as it was by the northern Skalds.

The acrostics of the Hebrews present a singular phenomenon in the literature of that people, and have been adduced as a coincidence between the northern and oriental poetry.* We find in the Bible several poems in which either a certain number of lines begin with the same letter of the alphabet, or all the verses begin with the letters in regular alphabetical order. But it is of

* Mallet, vol. ii. p. 193.

more importance to remark, that many passages in the Hebrew poetry most palpably correspond with some of the modes of alliteration adopted by the northern Skalds. Thus, in Jacob's dying blessing, Gen. xlix. 19,

Gad *gdud* ye*gud*ennu,
Vehu ya*gud* akeb.

Between which, and the following passage from the Edda, there exists the most striking resemblance:

Hvat er that *hlym*, *hlymia*
Er ec *hlymia* heyri nu til.

In like manner the following examples, the former taken from the song of Deborah, Judges v. 30, and the latter from the *Hávamál* of Odin, are as completely parallel as the genius of the languages will admit:

Halo yimtzeu yechalku *shâlâl*,
Racham rachmâthaim lerosh geber;
Shelal tzebâim lesisrâ,
Shelal tzebâim rikmâh
Tzeba rikmâthaim letzavrè *shâlâl*.

Deyr fe
Deyia frændur
Deyr sialfr it sama,
Enn ords-tir
Deyr alldreigi
Hvem ser godan getr.

In the Hebrew specimen I have only marked the words *shâlâl* and *shelal* as alliterations; but the reader will perceive that there is something of the same kind in *racham rachamâthaim*, in the second line, and *rickmâh, rickmâthaim*, in the two last lines; as also in *tzeva*, and the repetition of *shelal tzevaim* in the third and fourth lines. There is likewise a beautiful transposition of *tzevâim rickmâh*, and *tzeva rikmâthaim*, which deserves to be noticed, as corresponding, in a certain degree, with the rule of Icelandic poetry specified above, according to which the penultimate syllable of the first hemistich forms the first syllable in the second.

Nothing is more common in Hebrew poetry than to employ two assonants, the one at the beginning of the former member of the parallelism, and the other at that of the latter, only with the

addition of an augmentative particle, agreeing with that of the Icelanders, thus, Judges xiv. 14.

Méhaochel yatza *Maachal*
u*Meaz* yatza Mathok.

In the 18th verse of the same chapter, we meet with a similar example:

Mah Mathok Midvash
u*Mah* az Méari.

Sometimes the auxiliaries, as they are called by the Skalds, occur in the second hemistich, while the cardinal stands in the first, which is exactly the reverse of the position they occupy in the northern poetry. Of this, the following is an instance from the Song of Solomon, chap. i. 3.

Lerêach *shem*anecha tobim,
*Shem*en turak *shem*echa.

Of all the passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that I have fallen in with in the course of my reading, none exhibits such striking alliterations and repetitions of sound throughout as that containing the first of Balaam's prophecies, Numbers xxiii. 8.

Min-arâm yanhêni Balâk,
Melech-Moâb Méharré-kedem;
L*echâh* ârâh-li Yaakob,
uL*echâh* zoamâh Yisrâel.
M*ah ekob* lo *kab*oh El,
uM*ah ezom* lo *zâam* Yehovâh, &c.

This assonance is most evidently studied; for though the prophet tells us, in the third line, that he had been sent for (*ârâh*) to curse Jacob, he does not repeat this verb in the fifth, when he asks, "How shall I curse?" but borrows another verb (*nâkab*) manifestly suggested by the last syllable in the name of Jacob:

—— ârâh-li Yaa*kob*
Mah e*kob* lo *kab*oh El.

Similar insulated instances of an agreement of sound are to be found in the Greek poets; as,

Συν μοι πινε, συνηβα, συνερα, συνστεφανεφωρει
Συν μοι μαινομενω μαινε, συνσωφρονησω σωφρονι.*

* Quoted in Transact. Irish Acad. ix. p. 89.

As also in the Latin:

O Tite tute Tute tibi tanta tyranne tulisti.

ENNIUS.

Non potuit paucis plura plane proloqui.

PLAUTUS.

Von Troil produces a specimen of Finnish poetry, strongly alliterated, but which does not appear to be subject to the same rules with the Icelandic:

Kosta kulki kuningamme
Adolph Fredric armolinen
Meinan maalla matku eli,
Kaicki vereni venahti,
Haicki lukathti lihani &c.

The Celtic poetry, however, bears the greatest resemblance in this respect to the Icelandic, of any composed in languages so radically different from one another as these two manifestly are. The Welsh prosody depends entirely on alliteration. At first, it appears not to have been so very exact, and was but sparingly used by the bards of the sixth century. But from the Norman conquest to the death of Llewellyn, the alliteration was more strictly attended to; and from thence to the time of Queen Elizabeth this was so accurately observed, that a line not perfectly alliterated, would have been condemned as irregular. Comparing this progress in point of alliterative exactness with that of the northern Skalds, it has very justly been supposed that the Celts borrowed the art from their Teutonic or Scandinavian neighbours, with whom they maintained an intercourse from a very early period.* The following specimen from Evans will convey to the reader some idea of the Welsh assonances:

Bryd crof gryd arf greu a ddoddai
Brwydr eugrwydr curgrawn ni gueddiai
Bradog waith gwynniaith gwynnygai
Brys briwgad brig bragad briwai.

It is somewhat remarkable, that Turner, in his history of the Anglo-Saxons, should have been totally insensible to the strikingly alliterative nature of their poetry, as the most palpable instances of it occur in the specimens which he has inserted in his work.

* Percy in Mallet's Northern Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 107.

Between these compositions and those of the Skalds, the agreement is most regular and complete. The Anglo-Saxons have also their cardinal and auxiliaries, and make use of one or more augmentative particles at the beginning of the second hemistich in the same way. The Teutonic *ge* being used as a prefix to many of their verbs, it is of course left out of the account, and the alliteration proceeds to the second syllable, where the verb properly begins. For instance:

Meotod ana vat	*The Lord only knows,*
Hvyder seo Savul Secal	*Whither the soul shall*
Syththan hveorfan:	*Afterwards turn:*
And calle tha Ga[illegible],	*And all the spirits*
The for Gode hv[illegible]lath,	*That turn to God,*
Efter Death D[illegible]	*After death's day*
Dome bidath.	*Till the doom shall bide.*
On Fæder Fæthme	*To the Father's bosom*
Is seo Forth-gesc aft,	*It is conveyed,*
Digol and Dyrne,	*Hidden and [illegible]*
Drihten ana vat,	*God only knows,*
Nergende Fæther;	*The compassionate Father.*
Nænig eft-cymeth.	*None comes back*
Hider under Hrofas,	*To our abodes,*
The that Her for soth	*That can fin[illegible]th*
Manum secge,	*To men declare*
Hvyle sy Meotodes gesceaft,	*How the Lord hath made*
Sige-folka geSeta,	*The victors' thrones,*
Thar he Sylfa vunath.	*Where he himself doth dwell.*

Menologium Saxonicum.

But the Anglo-Saxon poets did not confine these alliterations to such verses as they composed in their own language. They also introduced them into Latin. Of the alliterated Latin poems of Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin, &c. many are still extant. The following may serve as specimens:

Althelmum nam Altissimum
Cano Atque clarissimum;
Summum satorem Solia
Sedet qvi per æthralia.

Te HOmo laudet	Non modo Parva
Alme Creator!	Pars qvia mundi est,
Pectore, mente,	Sed qvia Sancte
Pacis amore:	Solus imago, &c. *

* Rask's Anglo-Saxon Grammar, Stockholm, 1817.

The relics of ancient English and Scotch poetry which have been handed down to us are full of corresponding letters, and strongly indicate their Scandinavian origin. With a specimen in proof of this, taken from the *Houlat*, which was written about the middle of the fifteenth century, I shall conclude this part of the subject:

> Fra thy Gree to this Ground, let thy Grace Glyde!
> As thou art Grantare thairof, and the Givare;
> Now Sovrane quhair thou Sittis, by thy Sonis Syde,
> Send Sum Succor doun Sone to the Synnare!
> The Feind is our Felloun Fa, in the we confyde
> Thou Moder of all Mercye, and the Menare.
> For ws Wappit in Wo in this Warld Wyde,
> To thy sone Mak thy Mane, and thy Makar,
> Now Ladye Luke to the Lede, that ye so Lele Lufis.
>
> Thou Sekir crone of Salomon,
> Thou Worthy Wand of Aaron,
> Thou Joyis flece of Jedion,
> Us Help the taHufis.

The Icelandic poets were nearly as extravagant in the variation of their verses, as they were in regard to their rhymes. In Snorro's key of versification are contained upwards of one hundred different kinds of verse, a great number of which appear to have been invented by himself, and designed as models according to which other poets might frame their compositions. Yet, notwithstanding their multiplicity and variety, they are all reducible under four principal classes: *fornyrdalag*, *drottqvædi*, *toglag*, and *runhenda*.

1. Of these, *fornyrdalag* is the most ancient, and, at the same time, the most easy and simple, being unincumbered either with hemistichial or terminating rhymes. It has merely the alliteration, and, when regular, consists of four long syllables in each line. The stanzas generally contain eight lines; and of these there are two kinds; 1*st*, Such as have regularly four long syllables, as in the specimens which I have inserted from the *Völuspá*; 2*dly*, Such as have only three long syllables in the first and second lines, and four in the third and fourth. Thus,

Oc til Things	*The daughter of Lok (Death)*
Thridia jofri	*summoned the long from the world*
Hvedrungs mær	*to appear at the day of Odin.*
Or heimi baud.	

The six-membered stanzas differ only from the other, by the third and sixth lines exceeding the common measure, and consisting of five, six, or even more long syllables, according to the choice of the poet. Several of the Eddaic poems are of this kind, as *Vafthrudnismâl, Skirnisför, Hávamâl,* &c. Sometimes these two kinds of *fornyrdalag* alternate, as in the *Hakonarmâl;* the second and third stanzas of which consist of eight lines, and the rest of six.

2. The second kind of Icelandic verse, is called *drottqvædi,* or "heroic verse," on account of its boldness and majesty. It is subdivided into a vast number of subordinate branches, but they may all be reduced to two principal sorts; *drottqvædi* proper, which consists of six long syllables, and *liliulag,* which consists of eight. Both kinds are found in stanzas of eight lines, with or without rhyme; the latter differing only from *fornyrdalag* in the length of its quantity. This kind of verse is most common among the poets who flourished after the ninth century, and was better adapted to the honorary and encomiastic poems they composed in celebration of the heroic deeds of the princes whose courts they frequented, than the simple versification of antiquity.

3. The third species is termed *toglag,* and differs very little from *fornyrdalag,* except in the use of rhymes; the lines being of the same length, and each stanza containing, uniformly, eight lines. Of this kind, the following is a specimen from the "Key" of Snorro:—

Hâ röst hristir
Hlum vigg tiggia,
Bord grund bendir
Brimdyr styrir
Blâ veit briota
Byr skid vidi
Baud hardr bördum
Buðlungr thunga.

The royal ship splashes the sea, and moves the water with the helm. The vessel cleaves the blue-coloured waves. The brave prince loaded his ship with the full.

4. The fourth, and most common among the poets of the present day, is the *runhenda.* Each stanza consists of eight lines; but the length of the members is different, having sometimes only three syllables, and sometimes four, six, and even eight. The couplets are not encumbered with hemistichial rhymes, but are all rhymed at the end, either with one or two syllables.

Besides these different kinds of verse, the Icelanders use, at

times, what they term *omqvædi*, or "repetition," which varies exceedingly in its application; but generally consists of two or four hemistichs, which close one of the divisions of the poem, and contain, in epitome, the subject of what has been sung. Sometimes it occurs at the end of every stanza, and forms a kind of chorus, as it also does sometimes at the beginning.

As it may interest the reader, to see some specimens of Thorlakson's able translation of Milton's Paradise Lost, I shall here subjoin a few from different parts of the poem:—

Um fyrsta manns
Fellda hlydni
Og at-lysting
Af epli forbodnu,
Hvadan ovægur
Uppkom daudi,
Edens missir
Og allt böl manna;
Thar til annar einn
Ædri madur
Aptur fær
Oss vidreista
Og afrekar nyiann
Oss til handa
Fullsælu stad
Fögrum sigri;
Syng thu, Menta—
Modir himneska!
Thu sem *Horebs* fyrr,
A huldum toppi
Eda *Sinai*
Sauda-verdi
Innblest frædanda
Utvalit sædi,
Hve alheimur skopz
Af alls samblandi.
Eda lysti thig
Langtum helldur
At *Zions* hæd
Og *Siloa* brunni,
Sem framstreymdi
Hiá Frett gudligri?
Eins thar odur minn
A thig heitu,
Hvörr ser vogar
Med háu flugi
At efni thvi,
Er einginn hefir
Hingat til vidreynt
Hugar-krapta
Liodum i
Eda lausri rædu.
En einkum thu
Andinn godi!
Sem hefir hiarta fromt
I hávegum
Meir en mustera
Mestu prydi,
Fræd thu mig,
Thvi thu frodur ert!
Adur vartu thar
Er upphaf vard,
Og vængi volduga
Of vötnin hrærdir;
Alheims afgrunn
Sem egg dufa,
Til fiörs vermandi
Friofsamt giördir.
Upplys oliost,
Ebl hit veika,
I mer, svo hrodr hár
Sem höfugt efni
Vitni eilifrar
Veg Forsionar
Og giöri mönnum host
Guds rettlæti.
Inntu mer thá,
(Thvi einkis hlutar
Dylur thig himin
Ne dypz helviti:)
Hvörr feck svo tælt
Og æfrum vel t
Fyrstu hion
I farsæld vafin.
Og af Gudi
Gædd enu bæsta,
Sialfrádendur
Serhvörs hlutar,
Einum einasta
Undan skildum
At Skaparann
Og skipun haus smádu!
Thu hefir ollat
Uppreist theirri,
Hvervetna bölvut
Helvitis nadra!
Logand' af öfund
Og hefndar huga
Frum-modur vora
Frekt thu taldir.
Er thu siálfur var
Ur sæti hrundin
Dyrdar himneskrar
Dramb thitt fyrir,
Sem fysti thig
Med fylgd eidrofa
At hefia hernat
Vid himna Drottinn.
Ogg keppaz eptir
I krapti dyrdar
Og hæsta veldi
Vid hann at jafnæt:
Gudlegt almætti
Grimmum fianda
I botnlaust afgrunn
Bundnum steypti.
Sem logbrandur
Af leiptranda himni

Hrapadi *Satan*
Hrædiligur
Og var i demants
Droma keirdur,
Till hardrar hegningar
Hroka sinum,
Er ser vogadi
Alls valldanda
Maktar armi
Mot at risa.
[illegible]t og dagur
[illegible]usinnum
Skiptuz um,
Medan skari diöfta
Velltiz fallinn
I vellanda diki
Geysi thiakadur,
En gat tho ei drepiz.
Svo var ályktat;
Satan skylldi
Lengur bida
Lakari hefnda.
Raknar hann nu
Ur roti sliku,
Og minni i qvölum
M[illegible]a heilla.
Dapurr rendi
Diupsoeknum augum
Vidt um hverfis,
Vottum skelfingar,
Harms, heipt ræknis
Og hæstu drambsemi
Harla fiarstædrar
Hoss takmörkum.
Hann sá i einu
Um allt vidlendi
Sem mega englar
Mest yfirlita,
Ogn og olucku
Endalausa,
Og sig innlæstann
I henni midri.
Thar var at siá
Föllum áttum
Dapra dyblis u,
Diupann ofn kyndtann;
Tho gaf elldur sa
Einga birtu.
Heldur var si-sær
Sortin myrkra
Eintomafullur
Med ángur-boda,
Bleikar vofur
Bölfærandi.
Ro var thar eingin,
Ne rök til fridar,
Ei von, ne vyls bot,
En vesæld án enda
Sáz thar synda flod
Sifeldt alit
Af æ vellanda
Sem alldrei tæmiz,
Brennusteins báli;
Bolstad slikann
Satan sambodinn
Ser thar hreppti.
Her var ránglátum
Af rettvisinni
Utvalin byggd
Og erfd i myrkri
Thri-slikt frá Drottni
Og dyrdar liosi
Sem himin-rönd ytsta
Frá heims midpunkti.
O hvat miög mundi
Misjafnt háttat
Hibylum thessum
Og hinum mistu!
Nu sá Nidhöggur
Neyd umkringda
Bölmods brædur
I bál-straumi.
Likastur hönum
Lá hit næsta.
I makt og vondsku
My-höfdingi;
Sá var *Belzebub*
Sidar laungu
Puki nefndur
I *Palestina*.
Máli firlan
Af miklum otta
Hann thá vekur
Höfut andskoti:
Satan a himni
Sidan nefndur
Forsug ord thannig
Framberandi.
Ertu thetta?
Yfir mig gengur!
Lágt liggur thu,
Lángt er á milli
Thess er ádur
Af thusund englum
Heidur bar
I hæd skinandi.
Ertu thetta,
Sem ádur hafdir
Vina sáttmála
Vid mig bundit,
Sömu rádagiröd,
Sömu hyggiur,
Von og diörfun,
Til [illegible]
Er[illegible] thá
I aumu hruni,
Sem i sælunni
Samfara vordnir?
Her má nu merkja
Af háu falli,
Hve thungt var thrumuslag
Thess er oss refsti.
Hvörr vissi fyrr,
Enn ver nu reyndum
Krapt grand-eblandi
Grimmra vopna?
Tho skal mig ecki
That á bita,
Hvat refsa kann framar
Reidur sigrari.
Er eg enn nu
Sama sinnis,
Horfnar dyrdir,
En hugur ecki;
Föst er reidi,
Fast mer svidur
Vansi sá
Er vid mig skedi.
At minum heidri
Var ofnær gengit,
That mig Gudi gegn
Til grimdar hvatti,
Og otal anda,
Sem árædi syndu

Hans at flyja,
En hylla mitt veldi.
Og til orrustu
I upphædum
Valltrar vonar
Vopn at hefia,
Vellta ram byggdum
Ræsis stoli;
Tynt höfum sigri,
Enn ei tapat öllu.
Heill er hugur minn
Og hefndargirni,
Fastur fiandskapur
Og fiölmodur,
Og hvat umfram er
Osigrandi
Mæti eg eigi,
Fyri makt ne reidi,
Ei skal han æru thá
Af mer kuga.
Ef eg blingur
Beiddi nádar,
Og virdti gudliga
Vald that hnokinn,
Sem armur thessi
Efasamt giördi,
That væri vesældt,
Versta sneipa,
Hádung verri
Hreptu falli.
Oss giördu Forlog
Odaudliga,
Gáfu Guda krapt;
(Gott er i efnum:)
Hefir oss reynslan
Hyggnari giörda,
Enn ei veikari
I vopna-burdi;
Kunnum ver thvi
Til kifs eilifann
Samdrátt byrja
Med sigur-vændum.
Ver skulum bruka
Vel og krapta,
Og vid ovin vorn
Alldrei sættaz
Sem os unnum nu
Ytir hlackar,
Og rædur ein öllu
Riki himnum.

PARADISE LOST, Book I. line 1—124.

Flycktuz thessir
Og fleyri thangat
Dimmum augum
Dapurt vendandi,
Tho mátti ad visu
Thari merkja
Glampa litinn
Af glodi bragdi;
Er their sáu svo
Sinn foringia
Ei af Orvanting
Yfirfallin,
Er their sáu sig
I sælu tioni
Ei med ollu tho
Enn tortynda.
Einneginn ásynd
Erkifianda
Med sama sorta
Sáz umvafinn,
Tho feck heim heimtan
Hann at vana
Styrk hugar sins
Og stor ord mælti;
Voru thau agæt
At yfirskyni,
Enn i raun rettri
Rækar lygar,
Hvar med vina von
Hann veika hresti
Og theim hrædslu geig
Hratt ur briostum.
Hann baud hernæst
At hefiaz skyldi
Merki mektugaz,
Med heropi,
Básunu og ludra
Blæstri hvellum;
Kaus ser kjortign thá
Cherub Azazel,
Thoktiz hann heidri
Thessum nærstur,
Og strax ut rakti
Af staung gull-legri
Fanu furdanliga
Fylkis dyrindi;
Stod hun hafinn
Sem hærst kunni
Til at lita,
Sem teikn á lopti,
Blánkadi hun
Og blakti i vindi
Gulli giorthakin
Og Gimsteinum,
Sylfri, Seraphs tign
Og sigur prydi.
Gall thá geysi-hvellt
Glymiandi málmur,
Og herinn hropadi:
Hurra! giö.vallur,
Svo hol helvitis
Hlaut at rifna,
Skálf audn alheims
Og hin alldna nott.
Mátti nu gegnum
Myrkur lita
Tir-els teikna
Tiu thusundir,
Sem bloktu bylgium lik.
Blikandi i lopti
Mjog til at mynda
Sem morgunrodi.
Med theim uppkom
Af mækium, spiotum,
Skogur skialfandi
Skiöldum, hiálmum,
Rig reknum saman
I radir thraungvar.

Er ecki mátti
Fyrir enda siá.
Fer nu herr fram
I fylking jafnri,
Fylgdi thar saungur
Fagur-hlioda
Med ton Doriskum
Af trumbuslætti
Og hvellum pipum
Hvervetna sætur;
Sá er miög fordum
Til manndádar
Giördi hreifann hug
Hreysti manna,
Er vopna thing
Vaskir soktu
Ei blés hann ædi,
Ne of stopa,
Heldur styrkti briost
Med stödvun thánka.
Til at fá festu
Fotum örugga
Og dirfa dug
Fyrir daudans otta,
Til at fráfeelaz
Fletta ragann;
Nær oölld ædir
Med áhlaupi.
Varat hliomur hans
Hinn hátidlegi
Minnur máttugur
I mot hug-deigin,
Angist, efasemd,
Otta, sorgum,
Öndum og mönnum
Sem at threngia.
Thannig trúdu their
Med thánka stilltum
Hliodir heita jörd
Og hardla qvaldir,
Gat thogánga pinu
Glapit töfrum
Hliomur yndæll mjög
Af hliodpipum.
Nu their ná kunnir
Námu studar,
Feiknarlig reim
Fylktra skara
Lengdin leida baud
Og leiptur vopna,
Sem hermenn fornir
Med hlifar og spiot.
Thidu their ávarrs
Yfirbiodanda,
Enn hann skiot eygdr
Skodun tamri
Rennir brádt gegnum
Rod serhvörja,
Og sinn allann herr
Yfirlitur.
Nidurskipun
Mærsta fallegri,
Einnig skapnadi
Og ásynd theirra
Gaf hann gætrat
Gudum somandi,
Og thá at lyktum
Alla taldi.
Miög svo vid thetta
Mektar ogrynni
Of drambi thrutnar
Djofuls hiarta,
Stolltur stærir sig
Og stæliz mærsta,
Thvi iafnt lid thessu
Bar jord alldrei.
Færri var Phlegru
Slagda sægur
Hetiur thær *Thebis*
Er hjá striddu
Og Troju-kifs kappar
Kænir, á mædal
Biargvætta sinna
I beggia lidi.
Færra var tal
Hinna feiknar miklu
Riddara Skara
Skrökvögum i,
Og frá Serklandi
Sendu herrja,
Er Kallamagnusar
Kappa giörvalla
Vid Fontarabiæ
Fellda letu.
Tho var herr thessi,
Thusundsinnum
Alla daudliga
Sem yfir geck,
Oddvita sinum
Yfrit hlydinn.
Var hann fyrir theim
At vænleik mjög,
Stod hann sem turn
Med stolltar bragdi
Mist var ei giörvöll
Medskopt prydi.
Her sáz en hrasadr
Hofut-engill,
Dyrd sem dulin var
Med döcku [illegible]kri
[illegible]yri,
[illegible]iz
Gegnum siondeildar [illegible]
Glyiu daggar,
Og thá blakt hum,
Bak frá mana
Formyrkvut sunna
Yfir fold breidir,
Og jafnval alvöldum
Ugg i briosti
Eykur geigvænnar
Umbreytingar.
Svo var dymmur
Tho af dyrd skini
Hofut-engill
Af hæd fallinn
Og bar inngrafin
I andliti
Thrumu djup ör
Af thungu slagi.
Hryggd var afmálut
Helvardar kinnum
Nærsta döpur
Ná bleikum á;
Hár skein af enni
Hugar styrkur,
Vottar drambs vidnæt
Vændir hefnda.

Heit brann ur augum
Heiptar eisa
Tho var medaumkan
Thari blandin
Af brædra falli
Til böls dæmdra
Oendanlegs
I erfd qvala;
Med thvi mergd slika,
Margar thusundir,
Leit hann frá himni
Lángt burtrekna,
Fyri fylgd veitta
Flasi sinu,
Tho ser enn trua
At throtnum glansa.

Svo stendur bein vaxinn
A bláfialli,
Eiki-skogur
Ofanvissinn,
Og heidar greni
Sem háa toppa
Látit hefir
Fyri lopt-eldi
I briosti thrungnu
Bjo nu at varpa
A thá ordum
Erki diöfli;
Stod hann fylkinga
Midt a milli

I ára-hring
Inni luktur.
Nuvar gaumgæft
Od gætt thagnar,
Thá reyndi Satan til
I thrjár reisur;
Trodu ser engillig
Tár fram thrisvar
Gegnum diupt forakt
Og drambs feiknir.
Fundu tho loksins
Farveg thessi
Ord af andvörpum
Opt thverskorin.

Book I. line 522—621.

Hun at svo sögdu
Frá sidu leysti
Illsvalldan lykil
Ohaminglu
Tol that táraverdt
At tioni voru
Drog nu hringhala
Hrædillgann
Skrimsl skadvæna
Er skreid at porti.
Thá strax theyttiz upp
Thungur slagbrandur
Hvörjum eckert abl
Annat Vitis
Mátti hot hagga
Hun sidan vatt
Lagkæn lykil sinn
I lás flölbrotinn.
Datt frá digur hvörr
Demants bollti
Stinnar stal fiadrar
Strax undanletu
Svo skall frá bröndum
I skyndingu
Helvitis hurd
Med háu braki

Hrykti hardt gnunum.
I hennar lömum
That var thvilikaz
At thruma slægi
Svo nötrar nedsti botn
I Niflheimi.
Upp gat hun lokit
En opturbyrgia
Vondrar eigi var
I valdi *Syndar*.
Nu stodu portin
Næsta vidt opin
Svo styröld stærsta hvör
Med stridsfánum,
Hestum, hjolvögnum
Hægliga gat
Gengit thá thegar
Thar i gegnum.
Gaus ur gapi thvi
Grimdar-svæla
Og liotir logar,
Likt sem ur ofni;
Vard theim vidsynt miög
Um vid blasandi
Allt hit auda diup,
Adur hulit,

Haf eitt landa laust
Lioss og mælis.
Thar breitt og langt allt
(Tho til bysna se)
Tyniz án tölu,
Tid og stadur;
Thar Oborg ellst
Og Oskapnadur
Æ ráda riki
Regluleysis
Her their forfedur
Fyri ráda,
Fra hveim natturan
Nidurstigur
Oro umkringdir
Og æva stridi.
Her vill hvat ödru
Heitt og kallt
It vota og thurra
Verda meira,
Æ og án afláts
Utfærandi
Her ens minsta mor-
Er má ei deila.
Sem fer sveymandi
A sinn máta hvört

Til lids ut buit,
Lett edur höfugt
Hvast edur hudslett
Hvat og sein fara,
Otalin urmull
Eins og foksandur,
Af sterkt stridandi
Stormum theyttur.
Her ber hvörr um sig
Herradæmi
Eit augna blik:
En *Oskapnadur*,
Sem ur skera skal
Med skipun sinni,
Giörir theirra thá
Thrætu verri,
Hann fyrir hvöria
Heldur riki
Her er hönum nærst
Yfir hvivetna
Bods vald berandi
Blind *Tilvilian*.
Svo stod Satan nu
I sögdu diupi,
I hiulstri heim's vors,
Sem hönum máske
Verdur giört ad gröf,
Thar grund er eingin
Ei lopt, ei logur,
Ei Loga brimi,
Heldur frum efni
Og fræ til theirra,
Hvat vid annat allt
I oröd blandat,
Er at eilifu
Aldrei sættiz
Ut an Almættit
Af theim nyiar
Vilji veraldir
Verda láta.
Vid that villu-djup
Vard enum slæga
Bölverk bidleikat,
A barmi vitis;
Starandi stod han
Um stundar sakir,
Og virdti fyri ser
Vandann gang.
Ei var allmiott sund
Um ad sveima
Ei mundu minna
Merkja hlustir
Hark og háreysti
Her: (at likja
Mjög storum hlutum
Vid miklu smærri:)
En thá heitan her
Hildur æsir
Med gny giörvöllum
I gegn borg einni,
At um koll kunni
Keyraz nidur;
Ei minnur, enn ef
Ofan felli
Himins hvelfing,
Eda höfutskepnur
Yndi i áfflogum
Allt jardar hvel
Snoggla af sinum
Snunings ási.
Loksins lætur hann
Lánga vængi
Til flugs utspenta
Og fliott upplyptur
Botni burtsparkar
I bylgium reykiar
Svo fer hann fram
Um fiolda rasta;
Stollt um hug
Sem i stol af skyium.
En er thrutu thau
Thá vard fyrir
Audn, thar eckert var
Afar vid flæmi,
Misti thá mord-árr
Er hann minst vardi,
Flug sins, forgefins
Tho flögta reyndi,
Fell hann fimmthusund
Fadma tvenna
Ofan aptur
Olipra billtu.
Og dveldiz dettandi
I dag enn nu
Utan hefdi hann
Heilli verstu
Skyi framfeyktu
Fyrir ordit.
Brennusteini med
Og bitru loptsallti
Altendrat var that,
Og upphratt fianda
Svo margar milur,
En misti fareblis,
Og lendti loks
I ledju feni,
Hvar ei vatn var
Ne völlur fastur.
Thar östar hann
Thvi naer uppgefin
Seigann saur
Milli sunds og gaungu.
Tho thraut hann eigi
Thráláta keppni
Af fram blautt og bratt
Brautz hann gegnum.
Yfir thyckt og thunt
Tho thungt veitti,
Med höfdi fotum
Höndum, vængium,
Sveymar á sundi,
Söckur, gengur,
Fer fobnis gáng
Eda flug threytir.
Loks hann morkia ma
Moti ser koma
Grenjanda glaum,
Og greinarlausann
Ohliod undarlig,
Er ofallt glymja,
Rugladar raddir,
Sem rákuz gegnum
Holt hum-flæmi
Heldur sterkliga.
Styrir han nu thángat
Stefnu sinni
Ei vid abl nockurt
Otta sleginn,

Ei vid anda neinn,
I ærslum theim
Enum stiornlausu
Stad eganda.
Eitt var áform hans
At um fretta
Ena næstu leid,
Er lægi thángat,
Sem mættuz merki
Myrkva og hoss;
Andspænis hönum
Oskapnadar
Tiádi thron sig
Og tiald hans myrkva;
Thess döckvir dukar
Of diup breiddu sig.
Sitjandi thar sáz
I svörtu skrudi
Gri na gömu
[illegible]
[illegible]
Er samrikjandi.
Thar stodu thessir
Theim til hlida,
Orcus og Ades,
Og med ogn nefndur
Demogorgon,
Thá dauf Tilvilian
Thá Ospekt, Oldiod
Og O-orda,
Öll i áflogum,
Og enn at lyktum
Thræta thusund mynt
(Theirra verst.)
Hugdjarfur vid theim
Sneriz Helvardur,
Og skaut ordum at:
Ther Yfirvölld
Sem drottnit her
Yfir diupi thessu!
Thu aldin Osorg!
Thu Oskapnadur!
Hefir-at mig hnysni
Hingat leiddann,
At um hulin hag
Hefia vilji
Ransokn ne röskum.
Rikis yckar,
Heldur naudsyn nog
Nu faranda
Yfir audn thessa
Oskipuligu.
Gegnum vidáttu
Velldis yckars
Liggur leid min
I lioss álfur,
Og án vegvisis
Vil eg einförum
Til hálfs tupadur
Tröd hitta thá,
Er má nærst komaz
Ytstu merkjum
Humfullra heima
Og himin-deildar.
Og hafi há-vegs
Hilmir yckur
Nyliga rænt
Nockrum parti,
Odal yckart
Sem thio ádur var,
Thá er thánki minn
Thángat vendur—
Visit veg thann mer
Og vil eg yckur
Eckert allsmátt
I umbun g fa.
Land that er letut
Legg eg aptur
Undir yckart vald
Og audn sem fyrr
Svo gamla grima
(Geng eg thvi thannig)
Megi merki thar
Maktar sinnar
Aptur upp setja—
Er thá min hefndin
Eintom, en ardur
Yckar heill.

Book II. line 871—937.

INDEX.

A.

Abolition of the Althing, 405.
Akkrafiall, 293.
Al[illegible] wells, 30[illegible].
Alftavatn, 1[illegible]
[illegible]ine Pirate, depredations of, 260.
Almannaskard, 190.
Almannagià, chasm of, 57.
Alliteration, distinguishing characteristic of Icelandic Poetry, 545.
traces of in the Hebrew, 551.—In Greek and Latin, 552, 553. Finnish, 553.—Welsh, ibid.—Anglo-Saxon, 554.—Scotch, 555.
Althing, or General Assembly, 13, 59.—Abolition of, 405.
America, discovery of, by the Icelanders, 19.
Amtman, 16.
Anglo-Saxon poetry, 553, 554.
Arhver, 393.
Ari Frode, first Icelandic historian, 76.
Arna Magnæus, 344.
Arnarfell Yökul, 82.
Arnarvatn, 426.
Ascent of Krabla, 151.—Öræfa Yökul, 203.—Snæfell Yökul, 315.
Astronomer, Rustic, 435.
Audur the Rich, 345.
Aurora Borealis, 277.

B.

Baagoe, Mr, 127.
Badstofa, 87, 283.—Hot Spring, so called, 448.
Banks, Sir Joseph, 402.
Baptism of the Icelanders, 30.
Bath, St Martin's, 76.—Snorro Sturluson's, 387.—Vapour, 147, 392.

Barnaborg lava, 308.
Basalts, 191, 194, 217, 238, 314, 351, 354, 355, 376, 378, 384, 436.
Basket, passage of a river in, 172.
Baula, Mount, 384.
Bægisâ, 104.
Bears, Greenland, 276.
Beard, long, 361.
Berserkir described, 330.
Berserkia lava, 330.—Cairn, 332.
Benedictson, 336.
Bessastad school, 267.
Bible, Translations and Editions of the Icelandic, 459—496.
Scarcity o in Iceland, 57, 78, 93, 96, 112, 119, 130, 135, 166, 181, 187, 206, 218, 240, 254, 268, 306, 312, 338, 345, 439.
Desire of the Icelanders to obtain copies, 46, 89, 93, 104, 115, 122, 166, 294, 297, 306.—Gratitude for, 43, 116, 187, 324, 338, 410. Acquaintance with, 36, 79.
Traces of Volcanoes in, 136, 302.
Society, British and Foreign, print an edition of th Icelandic New Testament, 492.—Of the Bible, 494.—Grant to the Society in Iceland, 410.
Society, Icelandic, formation of, 406.—Letter from, 410.
Bildudal, factory of, 356.
Blâfell, 79.
Blanda river, 83, 434.
Blot stein, stone of sacrifice, 336.
Bodily habit and appearance of the Icelanders, 20.
Borealis, Aurora, 277.
Break-neck, a farm so called, 249.
Briàmslak, Surturbrand at, 368.
Breidamark Yokul, 195.
Bridge, the only one in Iceland, 171.
Bruara river, the passage of, 63.
Buda volcano, 313.
Budastad, factory of, 313.
Bulands-höfdi, dangerous pass of, 325.

Cascade, a curious, 261.
Cathedral at Reykiavik, service in, 50.—Holum, 107.
Caves, 257, 305.
Cavern, 313.—Remarkable one of Surtshellir, 420.
Character of the Icelanders, 21, 35, 457.
Children, education of, 96.—Punishment for neglect of, 174.
Chimnies, volcanic, 271, 300, 308.
Christianity, first attempts to introduce, 27.—Establishment of, 30.
Churches, Icelandic, described, 54, 58, 441.—Number of, 32.

Clergy, character of, 33.—Disadvantages of their situation, 48, 438.—Poverty of, 33.
Climate, 274.
Computation of time, 161.
Cones, volcanic, 82, 125, 136, 147, 289, 300, 309, 321, 330, 428.
Conradson, Sira Jon, 439.
Corn, wild, 242.
Courts of Justice, 17.
Crater of Krabla, boiling pool in, 152.—Elldborg, 309.

D.

David of the wilderness, 208.
Desert, journey through, 79—85, 426—426.
Diet of the Icelanders, 113.
Disposition of the Icelanders, 22.
Dispute settled, 92.
Diupavog, 182.
Domestic education, 285.—Employments, 282.
Doomhring. Doom's ring, 339.
Dress of the Icelanders, 120.
Drift-timber, 279.
Drunkenness, awful effects of, 354.—Not common in Iceland, 101, 354.
Ducks, eider, 352, 354.

E.

Earthquakes, 450—453.
Edda, the, described, 522, &c.
Education, domestic, 285, 25.
Eider-ducks, 352, 354.
Eirik the Red, discovers Greenland, 17.
Eirikson, Sira Vigfus, 437.
Elephantiasis, 231.—Job afflicted with, 233.
Elldborg volçano, 309.
Elld-eyar, or fire Islands, 41.
Elldvatn, river of, 239.
Elsineur, town of, 40.
Ennit, dangerous pass at, 323.
Epitaphs, 108.—Runic, 328, 386.
Eruptions, volcanic, 137, 209, 220, 231, 245, 249, 256, 266.
Eskifiord, factory of, 176.
Eyafialla Yökul, 256.
Eynfiord, valley of, 86, 117.
Eydal, 180.
Eyrarbacka, factory of, 268.
Evening, winter, how spent in Iceland, 283.
Exports, 400.
Exposition of Infants, 30.

F.

Family worship, 96, 285, 306, 375.
Faxefiord, 42.
Fell, 195, 254.
Ferry, 126, 158, 172.
Finnish poetry, alliterations found in, 553.
Finnstad, 172.
Fire islands, 41.
Fishing season, 279.
Flatey, island of, 353.
Flateyensis, Codex, 353.
Fliotshverfi, 21.
Floki, a Norwegian pirate, 8.
Fnioskâ, valley and forest of, 118.
Forms and Ceremonies of the Icelandic Church, Lutheran, 32.
Fossvöllum, 169.
Fox, sagacity of, 358
Fuhnen Society, 492.
Fulling, mode of, in Iceland, 282.
Funeral ceremonies, 337.

G.

Gardar, one of the first discoverers of Iceland, 8.
Garde, visit the archdeacon at, 45.
Geirland Yokul, 417.
Genealogical descent, Icelanders proud of, 380.
Genesis xix. illustrated, 139.
Geysers, or hot spouting fountains, 64.—Description of the Great Geyser, 65.—Eruptions of, 67, 71, 72, 73, 74.—New Geyser, 69, 74.—Discover the key to, 74.—Little Geyser, 75.—Geyser at Reykium, 417.—Eruption of, 450.
Gilefiord, 374.
Gilsbacka, 419.
Gislason, Sira Jon, 346.
Glàma ice-mountain, 381.
Gnupsvötn, 217.
Godi, what, 12.
Gotshalkson, Oddur, 468.—First translator of the New Testament into Icelandic, 469.—His version described, 471.
Government, form of, 11.
Greenland, first discovered, 17.—Danish colonies, 18.—Greenland ice, 275.—Bears, 276.
Grenjadarstad, visit the Dean of, 135.
Grimsey, scarcity of the Scriptures on, 93.
Grimstad, kind reception at, 160.
Grund, 90.

Grundarfiord, factory of, 324.
Gudbrand Thorlakson, bishop of Holum, 108.—Character of, ibid.—Epitaph, ibid.—Translates and prints the first edition of the Icelandic Bible, 475.

H.

Hafnarfiord, factory of, 46.
Hafursâ, passage of, 251.
Haga, farm of, 368.
Hallbiarna-stadar-kamb, marine productions at, 128.
Hallgrimr, Sira, of Steinstad, 100.
Hâls, reception at, 118.
Happiness, rural, 159.
Harboe, Bishop, 489.
Hâttalykill, 391.
Haukadal, 75.
Hay-making, 162, 281.
Health-drinking, origin of, 336, note.
Hebrew Scholar, 391.
Heidi or heide, what, 104.
Heimskringla of Snorro Sturluson, 391.
Hekla, 265.—Number of eruptions, 267.
Helgafell, 336.
Helgason, Rev. Mr, of Reykiavik, 51.—Letter written by, 410.
Helgason, Mr, of Grundarfiord, 326.
Hergilsey, 364.
Heriulfson, Biarni, discovers Greenland, 17.
Hialltalin, Mr, of Stappen, 314.
Hof, 166, 207.
Hollt, 253, 261, 360.
Hollta-vordu-heidi, 382.
Holmar, 177.
Holum, journey to, 102, 107.—Description of the cathedral, 107.—First erected into an Episcopal see, 110.—Abolished, ibid.—Situation and appearance, 111.
Hörgland, lepers at, 232.
Horses, Icelandic, size of, 49.—Price, ibid.—Sagacity of, 160.—Manner of loading, 52.—Changing, 207.
Hospitals, 236.
Hospitality, 54, 206, 207, 258, 340.
Hot-springs, near Haukadal, 64—77.—Laugarvalla, 63.—Reykialaug, 114.—Reykiahverf, 131.—Staffhollt, 298.—Lysuhol, 312.—Svinadal, 346.—Reykiaholar, 350.—Reykiadal, 392.—Hveravellir, 429.—Yfri and Sydri Reykium, 445.—Reykium, in the district of Ölfus, 447.—In the Breidafiord, 350.
Houses, Icelandic, described, 87.
Hrafntinnufiall, or Obsidian mountain, 156.
Hraundal, 301.

Hrossaborg volcano, 157
Hvam, 345, 437.
Hverfisfliot, 231.
Hveravellir hot springs described, 429.
Hvitâ, 81.—A river of the same name in Borgarfiord, 296.
Hvitârvatn, 81.
Hvitârvöllum, 295.
Husafell mouse, 417.
Husavik, factory of, 127.—Sulphur exported from, 120.
Hytardal, 304.

I.

Ice, Greenland, 275.
Ice-mountains. See Yökul.
Iceland, its situation, 1.—Of volcanic origin, ibid.—Its volcanoes, 2.—Lavas, ibid.—Hot springs, 4 and see Hot-springs.—General face of the island, 6.—Its discovery and colonization, 7.—Ancient constitution, 11.—Free republic, 12, 14.—Laws, 14.—Transfer of the island to Norway, 15.—Civil divisions and officers, 16.—Population, 20.—Personal appearance and disposition of the inhabitants, ibid.—Language, 21.—Art of writing, when introduced, 22.—Printing, [illegible] state of learning, 25.—Ancient religion, ibid.—Christianity introduced, 27.—Reformation, 32.—Ecclesiastical government, ibid.—Clergy, 33.—State of religion, 35.
Idolatry, Scandinavian, 335, 346.
Illustrations of Scripture, Gen. x. 25. 371.—xiv. 10. 140.—xix. 24, 30. 138.—Deut. xxxii. 17. and Psalm cvi. 37. 141.—Ruth ii. 4. 54.—1 Sam. xxv. 6. 55.—2 Kings xiv. 20. 327.—Job xxi. 33. 333.—xxii. 15—20. 138.—xxvi. 14. 69.—xxxvii. 22. 278.—Eccles. ii. 8. 141.—Isaiah xxxii. 2. 175.—xxxiv. 11. 164.—xlvii. 2. 243.—lx. 20. 384.—lxiv. 1—3. 302.—Jeremiah xviii. 14. 319.—xxxi. 21. 124.—li. 25, 26. 137.—Micah i. 3, 4. 302.—Nahum i. 5, 6. 137.—Matthew xxiv. 41. 243.—Mark i. 7. 114.—x. 12, 13. 55.—Luke x. 4. 175.
Illvidris-hniukar volcanic hills, 84.
Importation, articles of, 400.
Ingolf, one of the first settlers, 9.
Ingialldshvol, 322.
Ingölfshofdi, promontory of, 274.
Innraholm, 292.
Intelligence, uncommon, instances of, 79, 116, 202, 205, 435, 441.
Interment, mode of, 327.
Jonson, Sira Daniel, 303.
Gisle, 107, 477.
Sira Gudmundr, 311.
Sira Hiallte, 360.
Sira Jon of Audabrecka, 98.
Sira Jon of Mirkâ, 104.

Jonson, Sira Jon of Kâlfafell, 218.
Sira Jon of Mödrufell, 442.
Sira Steingrimr, 263.
Irarfell, 396.
Irish booths, 342.

K.

Kerlingarfialla volcanoes, 81.
Kialhraun, 82.
Kiarnè, interesting visit to, 94.
Klofa Yökul, 5, 193.
Klofa-hammars-rettar, collecting of sheep at, 299.
Knowledge, general diffusion of, 25.
Kötlugiâ Volcano, 245.—Eruptions of, ib.
Krabla, Mount, ascent of, 151.—Boiling pool in the crater of, 152.—View from, 155.
Krablanda, a boiling spring, 350.
Krisuvik, sulphur mountain and hot springs of, 454.
Krossholum, 346.
Kud fliot, the Nile of Iceland, 248.
Kvennabrecka, birth-place of Arna Magnæus, 344.
Kyrkiubæ Abbey, 237.

L.

Lagarfliot, 173.
Lamba-hraun, 84.
Landbrot, 239.
Landfoged, who, 16.
Language, Icelandic, 21.
Lângadal, 435.
Laugarvalla, hot springs at, 63.
Lava of Gardè, 45.—Thingvalla, 62.—Kial, 82.—Lamba, 84.—Adaldal, 125.—Myvatn, 137.—Brown, 218.—Skaptâr, 231.—Myrdalsand, 243.—Henglafiall mountains, 270.—Western Skardsheidi, 300.—Hraundal, 301.—Griotârdal, 303.—Barnaborg, 308.—Elldborg, 309.—Buda, 313.—Snæfell, 315, 321.—Berserkia, 330.—Svinadal, 346.—Hiardardal, 361.—Grænafell, 364.—Grey lava, 419.—Bald Yökul, 429.—near Alftavatn, 446.
Laws, 14.
Laxâ, or Salmon River, 53, 125, 136, 413.
Leirâ, 294.
Leirârgördum, 295.
Leprosy, Icelandic, described, 231.
Levitical law respecting the leprosy, ibid.
Library, school, at Bessastad, 287.—Female, 94.—Private, 336, 360.—Circulating, 182.
Liosavatn lake, 123.
Literature of the Icelanders, remarks on, 22.

Lomagnupr, promontory of, 217.
Lonsheide, 186.
Lögsögumadr, office of, 14.
Lysuhol, hot-spring of, 312.

M.

Magnæus Arne, Icelandic antiquary, 344.
Magnusson Skule, Sysselman, 374.
Berg Sira, 187.
Finn, Professor, translates the Poem of Thanks from Iceland to the Bible Society, 503.—One of the first living poets, 544.
Mann-tapn-gil, dangerous chasm of, 362.
Markarfliot, 261.
Messiah, Klopstock's, translating, 103.—Pope's, 361.
Midnight-sun, 382.
Milton, translator of, 100, 102.—Specimens of translation, 557—563.
Mineral springs, 307.
Mineralized wood, 368.
Mödrufell, interesting visit to, 442.
Mödruvalla Abbey, 97.
Mossfell church, 54.
Mouse, sagacity of, 417.
Myvatn, lake of, 143.

N.

Naddodd discovers Iceland, 8.
Narfeyri, 340.
Neglect of education punished, 174.
Nordurá, 298, 384.
Nordur-hver, 131.

O.

Oath, pagan form of, 12.
Obsidian mountain, 156.
Occupations, 279.—Winter, 282.
Oddé, interesting visit to, 263.
Odin, 26.
Olafsen, Eggert, 366.
Olafsvik, 323.
Ölfusá, 269.
Order of Council in favour of the Icelanders, 403.
Öræfa Yökul, 203.—Eruption of in 1727, 209.
Oxa-hver, 132.

P.

Papar, 237.
Papey, 184.

Paradise in Iceland, 123.
Paradise Lost, translation of, into Icelandic, 102.
Extracts from, 557.
Parishes, number of, 31.
Paulson, Sira Guttorm, 177.
Svend, surgeon, 250.
Peninsula, north-west, described, 348.
Penmanship superior, common in Iceland, 46, 283.
Period of traffic, 47, 398.
Pirates, Algerine, depredations committed by, 260.
Poem of Thanks from Iceland to the British and Foreign Bible Society, 497.
Poetry, Icelandic, inquiry into, 511.
Pope's Universal Prayer, introduced into the service of an Icelandic church, 171.
Essay on Man translated, 545.
Messiah translated, ibid.
Popery introduced into Iceland, 31.
Population of Iceland, 20.
Preaching, style of, in Iceland, 33.
Printing introduced, 24.
Psalm-book Icelandic, 170.
Punishment

R.

Reformation of religion, 32.
Reinavellir, 195.
Rein-deer, 270.
Religion, early, of Iceland, 25.
state of, in Iceland, 35.
Republic, ancient Icelandic, 12.
Reykhollt, 387.
Reykiahlid church, remarkable preservation of, 142.
Reykiaholar, 350.
Reykiahverf, hot springs of, 131.
Reykialaug, 114.
Reykiavik, description of, 43.—State of society in, 290.—Annual fair at, 399, 406.
Reykium, hot-springs of, 447.—Yfri, 445.
Rhyme, Icelandic, nature of, 549.
Ring Mount, 431.
Runic epitaphs, 328, 386.
Rural happiness, 162.
Rustic astronomer, 435.

S.

Sacrifice, mode of, among the heathen, 335.—Place and stone of, 339.—Human sacrifices, ibid.
Sæmund the learned, 264.—His share in the Edda, 281.

Sagas, what, 23.
Salmon fishery, 413.
Salutation, mode of, in Iceland, 54.
Saunghellir, a cave, 305.
Saurbæ, learned priest at, 395.
Saxo Grammaticus, his testimony respecting the hot springs in Iceland, 77.
Scholar, Hebrew, 394.
School, the only one, at Bessastad, 287.
Scribla hot spring, 388.
Scriptures, Icelandic. See Bible.
Setberg church, 326.
Seyder hot spring, 449.
Sheep-pens, 299.
Sida, district of, 219, 231.
Siddim, valley of, 140, 141.
Skaftafell, 213.
Skagafiord, 438.
Skagastand factory, 436.
Skalds, who, 538, 539.
Skard, 374.
Skardsheide, western, volcano of, 300.
Skaptâ, 223.
Skaptâr volcano, where situated, 221.—Eruption of, in 1783 described, 220.—228.—Its awful consequences, 220, 229.
Skeiderâ Yökul, its vacillations described, 215.
Skialfandafliot, 124.
Skialldbreid, volcano of, 417.
Skogar, water-fall at, 257.
Skrida, disruptions from the mountains so called, 107, 326—350.
Snætell Yökul, 311, 315.—Ascent of, 315.—View from the summit of, 319.
Sniâfell, 174.
Solheima, 255.—Yökul River of, 256.
Snorra-laug, 387.
Spreingi-Sand, 82.
Springs. See Hot Springs.
Stad, 379.
Stadarstad, 311.
Stafafell, visit to the Dean of, 197.
Staffholt, 296.—Hot spring near, 297.
Stappen, factory of, 314.
Stapsheidi, bewildered on, 178.
Stickesholm, factory of, 337.
Stiorn, ancient Icelandic MS. 464.
Stistrup, Mr, sends Bibles to Iceland, 490.
Strokr, or New Geyser, 69, 71, 72.
Sturluson, Snorro, his birth-place, 346.—Residence at Reykholt, 367. ibid.—His celebrity, 390.—Murder, 391.—Literary works, 1

T.

Temple of Thor, 335.
Tents, Icelandic, described, 56.
Thanks, Poem of, 497.
Thorkelson, Jon, liberality of, 289.
Thingeyri factory, 359.
Thing, what, 12.
Thingvalla, 338.—Church, 58.
Thingvalla-vatn, lake so called, 55.
Thomas, Sira, of Flatey, 353.
Thor, the Scandinavian Deity, 26.—Worship of, 335.
Thorsness, 334.
Thorolf Mostrarskegg, 334.
Thorsteinson, Dean, 170.
Thuerâ Abbey, 91.
Thykvabæ Abbey, 241.
Timber-drift, 379.
Time, computation of, 161.
Tindafiall, 80.
Tiörnabæ, 87.
Torfa Yökul and hot springs, 242.
Toasts, origin of, 335.
Tract Society, Icelandic, 186.
Trade, history of the Icelandic, 398.
Traffic, period of, 47, 398.
Translation of the Icelandic Scriptures, 459.
Travelling, mode of, 49.—Dangerous in winter, 278.
Trölladyngia, 270.

V.

Vadla Heidi, ascent of, 117.
Valhalla, the Scandinavian Heaven, 26.
Vapour baths, 147, 392.
Varmahlid, 258.
Vatneyri, factory of, 365.
Vegetables, growth of, 127.
Vestmanna islands, 259.
Vidalin, Bishop, letter from, 410.
Videy, island of, 44.
Vik, 250.
[illegible] discovery of, 19.
[illegible] Western Skardsheidi, 300.—Elldborg, 308.—Kerlingarfialla, 81.—A[illegible]fell, 82.—Krabla, 151.—Leirhnuker, 155.—Hrossaborg, 157.—Herdubreid, 161.—Öræfa, 203.—Eruption of, 209.—Skaptâr, 222.—[illegible]lugiö, 245.—Eyafialla and Solheima, 256.—Hekla, 265.—Eruptions [illegible], 267.
[illegible]rafford, factory of, 167.

W.

Winter, 273.—Severe, 275.—Evening, how spent, 283.
Worship, family, 96, 285, 306, 375.—Social, 96.—Public, 50, 119, 342.
Writing, when first introduced, 22.

Y.

Yökul, Blâfell, 81.—Eirik's, ibid.—Bald, ibid.—Geitland's, ibid. and 417.—Arnarfell, 82.—Hialltadal, 106.—Klofa, 5, 193.—Myrar and Heinaberg, ibid.—Breidamark, 196.—Öræfa, 203.—Solheima, 256.—Eyafialla, ibid.—Snæfell, 311, 315.—Glâma, 381.—Dranga, ibid.

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